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Ego Eimi and the Surpassing Greatness of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John

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By

Keith Kekoa Pang

Lynchburg, Virginia

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APPROVAL SHEET

Ego Eimi and the Surpassing Greatness of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John

By: Keith Kekoa Pang

READ AND APPROVED BY:

Supervising Reader: _____

Tom Campbell, Ph.D.

Second Reader: _____

Monte Shanks, Ph.D.

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Abstract

When it comes to the "ἐγὼ εἰμι" statements (translated as "I am" in English), in the Gospel of John, there has been a heavy emphasis from scholarship on the seven declarations which contain a metaphor. These are the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements such as “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, English Standard Version) or “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). However, there are seven other ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John’s Gospel which do not contain a metaphor, such as, “*I* who speak to you *am* he” (John 4:26, emphasis mine). Consequently, scholars have tended to separate these declarations based on their form without any significant connections made to one another. However, David M. Ball’s work, *I Am in John's Gospel*, has shifted how scholars approach the “I am” statements. Ball correctly identified that all of Jesus’ ἐγὼ εἰμι statements were meant to be understood together. Furthermore, he identified the correct background to understand these declarations, which is through the lens of the Old Testament and Judaism.

Since Ball’s work, there has been no significant treatment of the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John. This dissertation aims to further the idea that the 14 ἐγὼ εἰμι statements are interconnected under the biblical-theological theme of Jesus’ surpassing greatness compared to what came before Him in the Old Testament, Judaism, and common beliefs in the first century AD. Each pericope where Jesus’ “I am” statements are found reveals His surpassing greatness by indicating He is greater than what came before Him. Moreover, there are occasions when the text reveals that Jesus is the greater fulfillment of an Old Testament type. Additionally, each "I am" statement is related to the overall themes presented by John in his Gospel. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that John intended these declarations to reveal the surpassing greatness of Jesus, further revealing His identity and work in the world.

Abbreviations

1 Clem.	*1 Clement*
1 En.	1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)
1QS	Rule of the Community
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
2 Esd.	2 Esdras
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
4 Ezra	4 Ezra
Ann.	*Annales*
AD	*anno Domini*
Ant.	*Jewish Antiquities*
b. Hul.	*Babylonian Hullin*
Bar	Baruch
BC	before Christ
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
Gen. Rab.	*Genesis Rabbah*
Lev. Rab.	*Leviticus Rabbah*
Haer.	*Against Heresies*
Hist. eccl.	*Ecclesiastical History*
Ign. *Rom.*	Ignatius, *To the Romans*
J.W.	*Jewish War*
Jub.	Jubilees
Life	*The Life*
m. Nid.	*Mishnah Niddah*
m. Ketub.	*Mishnah Ketubbot*
m. Sabb.	*Mishnah Shabbat*
m. Sanh.	*Mishnah Sanhedrin*
m. Sukkah	*Mishnah Sukkah*
m. Yeb.	*Mishnah Yebamot*
Mek. R. Ish.	*Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael*
NA^{28}	*Novum Testamentum Graece,* Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
NASB95	The New American Standard Bible (1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version
LXX	Septuagint

OT	Old Testament
Odes Sol.	Odes of Solomon
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
NT	New Testament
Sir	Sirach
Song Rab	*Song of Songs Rabbah*
T. Ab.	Testament of Abraham
T. Iss.	Testament of Issachar
T. Mos.	Testament of Moses
T. Zeb.	Testament of Zebulun
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

Chapter 1

Introduction

The statements made by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John, where He uses the phrase "ἐγὼ εἰμι" (translated as "I am" in English), hold significant meaning and theological depth. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus uses this phrase 14 times. Jesus used ἐγὼ εἰμι in a variety of contexts, from revealing His identity as the Messiah (John 4:26) and to creating meaningful and memorable metaphors such as, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). These statements invite the reader to delve deeper into their meaning and explore the profound importance of Jesus' use of this phrase.

Jesus used ἐγὼ εἰμι in a meaningful manner 14 times in the Gospel of John. Each occurrence of ἐγὼ εἰμι in this Gospel is significant based on the context Jesus used it. However, the majority of the attention to these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements have been the study of those "I am" statements that contain a metaphor, such as "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35a). There are six other "I am" proclamations with metaphors, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For now, it will suffice to say these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements with a metaphor have been the focal point in scholarship.[1] This is primarily because the other ἐγὼ εἰμι declarations do not have a formulaic structure. Thus, there is no consensus on how to interpret each of these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements without a metaphor.[2]

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[1] David M. Ball, *I Am in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, (Sheffield, England: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1996), 15.

[2] Ibid., 162.

This is because these "I am" statements can sometimes be understood in an absolute sense (John 8:58). In other instances, a predicate may be assumed depending on the surrounding context. For instance, the first occurrence of ἐγὼ εἰμι is in John 4:26. In a discussion with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Jesus responded to her statement about waiting for the Messiah to reveal what she needed to know with "ἐγὼ εἰμι" (John 4:26). [3] This example of Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι could be translated with a predicate. Thus, the word "he" is often supplied in English translations because the woman referred to the coming Messiah in John 4:25 (ESV, NIV, CSB).[4] These seven "I am" statements without a metaphor will be covered more in-depth in an upcoming section of this chapter.

The Unification of the "I Am" Statements

Up until this point, there has been a brief discussion about the 14 ἐγὼ εἰμι statements that will be covered in this dissertation. These "I am" statements can be classified into two groups. The first group comprises seven ἐγὼ εἰμι statements that contains a metaphor. The second group consist of the remaining seven "I am" declarations with no metaphor. This division of the "I am" statements may suggest that they should be evaluated separately. However, it will be argued that these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements are interconnected. Similarly, David M. Ball advocates that all the ἐγώ εἰμι declarations are unified because each of them operates with a similar conceptual

[3] A more detailed discussion of John 4 can be found in Chapter 2.

[4] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 241.

background, namely, the Old Testament and Judaism.[5] Similarly, this dissertation will assume the unification of the ἐγώ εἰμι declarations that are grounded in the Old Testament and Judaism.

There are times when Jesus' use of ἐγώ εἰμι explicitly alludes to the Old Testament. One instance is Jesus' declaration, "I am [ἐγώ εἰμι] the good shepherd" (John 10:11). This statement would have recalled Yahweh's prophecy through the prophet Ezekiel against the shepherds in Israel (Ezek 34). Furthermore, it connects Jesus to the one David proclaimed was his shepherd (Ps 23:1). However, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement goes beyond just these two passages.[6]

Furthermore, there are instances of Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι that point to the name of God, Yahweh (John 8:58).[7] This name was revealed to Moses when he asked God to give him a name to tell the Israelites who had sent him (Exod 3:13-14). In the LXX, it is ἐγὼ εἰμι that is used to translate God's name in Exodus 3:14. Furthermore, the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements can also be tied to God's declarations found several times in the book of Isaiah with the form "אֲנִי הוּא" (Isa 43:10, 25; 51:12).[8] In these declarations, Yahweh emphasizes that "I am he" (Isa 43:10), which is a translation of אֲנִי הוּא. Moreover, the expression אֲנִי הוּא is often translated in the LXX with ἐγὼ εἰμι, which makes it plausible that the phrase אֲנִי הוּא is rightfully connected to the name of God, Yahweh.[9] The Gospel of John emphasizes the divinity of Jesus (John 1:1-18; 5:17-18).

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[5] Ball, 171.

[6] These implications will be drawn out in further detail in Chapter 4.

[7] See: Carson, 343-344; Morris, 62; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 210.

[8] This phrase (אֲנִי הוּא) is also found in Deut 32:39, in which Yahweh emphasizes that He alone is God. The LXX translates (אֲנִי הוּא) with (ἐγὼ εἰμι).

[9] Grant Macaskill, "Name Christology, Divine Aseity, and the I Am Sayings in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 12, no. 2 (2018): 223.

This dissertation aims to establish a connection between all the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements made by Jesus in the Gospel of John and the biblical-theological theme that advocates that Jesus is greater than everything that came before Him. This includes the Old Testament, Judaism, and common beliefs held during the first century AD. This biblical-theological theme helps to unify the "I am" statements. David M. Ball also mentions that Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements are connected to the Old Testament and Judaism, which Jesus fulfills; however, he only briefly mentions this.[10] This dissertation will expand on this unification through the biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness.

Occasionally, this biblical-theological connection is made from allusions or quotations from Scripture. At other times, this connection to Jesus' surpassing greatness is made through typology. Typology seeks to discover analogies found in God's word as He has worked throughout history and applies them to the New Testament people, such as Jesus Christ.[11] Craig Evans and L. Novakovic comment on this and state, "Typology establishes a parallel or correspondence between a person, event or institution in the OT (the type) and another person, event or institution in the NT (the antitype), regardless of whether an author uses the *typos* terminology or provides an explicit link between the type and its antitype."[12] Typology heavily

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[10] Ball, 269-272.

[11] Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 249. See: Benjamin J. Ribbens, "Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue," ed. Joel B. Green, *Journal of Theological Interpretation, Volume 5*, no. 1–2 (2011): 90.

[12] Craig A. Evans, Novakovic L., "Typology," ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 986.

emphasizes the unity of Scripture and salvation history.[13] Furthermore, New Testament authors used this type of interpretation (1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 2:5-6; Heb 7).

Additionally, Jesus, Himself, understood that the Scriptures pointed to Him as He declared, "You search the *Scriptures* because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is *they* that *bear witness about me*" (John 5:39, emphasis mine). The Apostle John even hints at the surpassing greatness of Jesus in the pericopes where the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements occur. One example is when the Samaritan woman asks Jesus, "Are you *greater* than our father Jacob? *He* gave us the well" (John 4:12, emphasis mine). It is worth noting that multiple biblical-theological themes can be derived from the "I am" statements of Jesus. However, this dissertation will primarily concentrate on Jesus' declarations of ἐγὼ εἰμι and their connection with the suggested biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness in comparison to what came before Him.

Presuppositions of this Work

Before delving into the two different types of ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in this Gospel, it is imperative to address the authorship of the Gospel of John. The question of who wrote the Gospel of John may seem less significant than the content of the gospel itself, but it matters a great deal. Suppose it was written by the Apostle John, an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry. In that case, this Gospel carries a different weight and authority than if it was written by a second-century Christian who did not witness Jesus' ministry.[14]

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[13] Evans and Novakovic., 987.

[14] Morris, 4.

This dissertation assumes that the author of the Gospel is the Apostle John, son of Zebedee. One of the most critical pieces of evidence that are in favor of the authorship of John comes from Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons in the second century AD.[15] Irenaeus wrote, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned on his breast, also published the Gospel while living at Ephesus in Asia" (*Haer.* 3.1-2).[16] The disciple Irenaeus refers to is the Apostle John.[17] Furthermore, Irenaeus stated that the church in Ephesus was "founded by Paul, and John lived there till the time of Trajan" (*Haer.* 3.3-4).[18] It is known that Irenaeus was friends with Polycarp, who knew the Apostle John during his time in Asia Minor.[19] Eusebius, who was a historian of the early church, recorded that Polycarp was "Entrusted with the oversight of the Church in Smyrna by those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Lord" (*Hist. eccl. 5.*20.5-6).[20]

Furthermore, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, both writing in the second century AD, support that John, Son of Zebedee, wrote the Gospel.[21] According to Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria wrote, "That John, last of all, conscious that the outward facts had been set forth in the Gospels, was urged on by his disciples, and, divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a

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[15] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), lxvi.

[16] Irenaeus of Lyons, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies, Book 3*, ed. Irenaeus M. C. Steenberg, trans. Dominic J. Unger, vol. 64, Ancient Christian Writers (New York; Mahwah, NJ: The Newman Press, 2012), 30.

[17] See: Beasley-Murray, lxvi.

[18] Irenaeus, 30.

[19] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 26.

[20] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Roy Joseph Deferrari, vol. 19, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 329.

[21] Ibid., 27.

spiritual Gospel" (*Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7).[22] By the end of the second century AD, there was only one known opponent to Johannine authorship, who was known as *Alogoi*.[23] Those who oppose Johannine authorship base it on internal evidence in the Gospel while dismissing the external evidence.[24]

However, the internal evidence is favorable for the Apostle John's authorship.[25] One instance is from John 13:23. This verse states, "One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side" (John 13:23). This passage takes place during the Last Supper, in which only the twelve disciples are at this meal (Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14). This means the "disciple whom Jesus loved" is one of the twelve apostles, which is likely the Apostle John (John 19:26; 21:2, 7).[26] The fact that the disciple Jesus loved was one of the 12 disciples is the crux of the argument for the Apostle John's authorship. As mentioned, this dissertation will assume that the best solution to the internal and external evidence is that the Apostle John, Son of Zebedee, is the author of this Gospel.[27]

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[22] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 6–10*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, vol. 29, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 27.

[23] Carson, 68. Carson further states, "*Alogoi*—a substantivized adjective meaning 'witless ones', but used by the orthodox as a pun to refer to those who rejected the *logos* ('Word': *cf.* notes on 1:1) doctrine expounded in the Fourth Gospel, and therefore the Fourth Gospel itself. Further, an elder by the name of Gaius in the Roman church, who was one of the *Alogoi*, maintained orthodoxy at every point except in his rejection of John's Gospel and the Apocalypse."

[24] Carson, 68.

[25] Ibid., 75. An excellent, detailed discussion of the internal evidence for and against John's authorship can be found on p. 68-80. See: Morris, 4-21; Beasley-Murray, lxvi-lxxxi; Kruse, 24-30; Burge, 25-28.

[26] See: Carson, 71, for a more detailed discussion.

[27] Morris, 23. Morris makes an excellent point: "I accept the view that John the Apostle was the author of this Gospel. I agree that this view does not account for all the evidence. But then neither does any other view known to me. This one seems to account for the facts best."

"I Am" Statements in the Gospel of John

This section will briefly discuss the characteristics of the 14 ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John. It is important to note that not every instance of ἐγὼ εἰμι will be covered in this study (John 7:34; 12:26; 14:3; 17:14, 16, 24). The exclusion of these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements from the ones covered in this dissertation is commonly agreed upon in scholarship due to word order, context, or formulation.[28] In John 7:34, the phrase "ἐγὼ εἰμι" is present, but not in the correct order. More importantly, it is not the main subject of the sentence. Jesus was explaining where He was going and why the Jewish leaders would not be able to follow Him there (John 7:34). However, in other instances, such as John 4:26, the phrase ἐγὼ εἰμι is much more prominent and emphasizes the message being conveyed. In John 4:26, the phrase "I am" is used emphatically to highlight that Jesus is the Messiah.

"I Am" Statements with a Metaphor

The ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John can be divided into two major categories. The first category is the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements made by Jesus that have an accompanying metaphor. In this Gospel, seven "I am" statements fit into this category; each will be listed in the order they appear. The first ἐγὼ εἰμι statement with a metaphor is Jesus' declaration of "*I am* the *bread of life* or *living bread*" (John 6:35, 48, 51, emphasis mine). The second is, "*I am* the *light of the world* (John 8:12; 9:5, emphasis mine). The third ἐγὼ εἰμι statement is, "*I am* the *door of the sheep*" (John 10:7, 9, emphasis mine). The fourth declaration of this category is, "*I am* the *good shepherd*" (John 10:11, 14, emphasis mine). The fifth instance is, "*I* am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). The sixth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement with a metaphor is, "I am the way, the truth, and

[28] See: David M. Ball, 21; D. A. Carson, 57; 340; Gerald Borchert, 208; Raymond Brown, 534.

the life" (John 14:6). Finally, the last ἐγὼ εἰμι statement of this category is Jesus' statement, "I am the true vine or vine" (John 15:5).

These seven statements with a metaphor are easily recognizable by their formulaic structure and their similarity in function.[29] Another commonality between these seven statements is that they all contain memorable images or concepts.[30] Furthermore, these "I am" statements are within pericopes that discuss and highlight the importance of following Jesus (John 6:35).[31] Jesus intentionally chose to use these metaphors because of their association with the stories and symbols of the Old Testament and Judaism.[32] This formula is as followed: the presentation of ἐγώ εἰμι, followed by an article, then a metaphor.[33] Each of these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements will be covered in more detail in the subsequent chapters.

"I Am" Statements without a Metaphor

The other seven ἐγὼ εἰμι statements made by Jesus are those that do not contain a metaphor. The order of these statements will follow their respective appearance in the Gospel of John. The first instance is when Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman at the well and said, "*I* who speak to you *am* he" (John 4:26, emphasis mine). In the Greek text, Jesus' response is "ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι" (John 4:26, Nestle-Aland 28th Edition). The second instance of ἐγώ εἰμι in this

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[29] Ball, 162.

[30] C. H. Williams, "'I Am' Sayings," ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 396–397.

[31] Williams, 397.

[32] John C. Hutchison, "The Vine in John 15 and Old Testament Imagery in the 'I Am' Statements," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (2011): 79.

[33] Ball, 163.

category is when Jesus was walking on the Sea of Galilee towards the disciples and said, "*It is I*; do not be afraid" (John 6:20, emphasis mine). Once again, in the Greek text, Jesus begins with ἐγώ εἰμι, which is not captured in the ESV translation and many other English translations (NIV, CSB, NASB95, NLT).

The third instance is when Jesus said, "For unless you believe that *I am* he you will die in your sins" (John 8:24b, emphasis mine). The next "I am" statement of this category is when Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* he" (John 8:28a, emphasis mine). The fifth occurrence in this category is when Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, *I am*" (John 8:58, emphasis mine). The sixth occurrence is after Jesus washes the disciples' feet and predicts His betrayal. Jesus said, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that *I am* he" (John 13:19, emphasis mine). Finally, the last ἐγώ εἰμι statement of this category is made by Jesus before He is arrested and betrayed. When Judas Iscariot, soldiers, officers, and Pharisees went to arrest Him, they asked for Jesus of Nazareth; Jesus responded to them, "*I am* he" (John 18:5, 8, emphasis mine).

There is often a discussion about the origin and importance of these seven ἐγώ εἰμι statements that do not contain metaphors because they *appear* to lack Jewish parallels.[34] However, this is not the case, as will be examined and explained in the upcoming chapters. Furthermore, the interpretation of these statements can vary based on the context, as they can be

[34] Gary M. Burge, "'I Am' Sayings," ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 355.

taken literally or with a qualifier added.[35] Additionally, these ἐγώ εἰμι declarations do not adhere to the same formula as the ones that contain a metaphor (John 6:35).[36]

However, there is a risk in trying to develop a set formula for all the "I am" statements because it usually leads to ignoring the significance of the ἐγώ εἰμι statements which do not fit a specific formula (John 4:26).[37] Since that is the case, David Ball advocates for a more precise way of distinguishing the ἐγώ εἰμι declarations without a metaphor. He suggests three categories: the first being "I am" phrases with a definite article and participle (John 4:26); the second being absolute sayings where ἐγώ εἰμι stands alone (John 8:58); and the third being grammatically absolute declarations paired with a ὅτι clause to express future fulfillment.[38] Ball's approach will be utilized by this study for the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings without a metaphor.

The Significance of Ball's Work on the "I Am" Statements

Before David Ball's book, *I Am in John's Gospel*, the "I am" statements had not significantly been researched since Eduard Schweizer in AD 1930.[39] This dissertation leans upon Ball's work because it provides an up-to-date review of previous research on the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John.[40] Ball examines how several scholars approached Jesus' ἐγὼ

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ball, 167-168.

[37] Ball, 167.

[38] Ball, 168-169.

[39] Ibid., 12.

[40] See: Thomas R. Hatina, "Review of 'I Am' in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications by D.M. Ball," *Themelios* 22, no. 2 (1997): 62; D. A. Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," ed. Craig A. Evans, *Bulletin for Biblical Research, Vol. 5* (1995): 33.

εἰμι statements by discussing each scholar's understanding of the background for the "I am" statements.[41] Prior to Ball's work, many scholars followed Schweizer's idea that the Gospel of John was to be understood through the lens of Gnostic and Mandean literature.[42]

Since this is the case, it created misguided attempts to ground the "I am" statements to other ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in various types of literature, such as Greek, Egyptian, and Mandean literature.[43] At the time of this writing, Ball's work is still the most in-depth and up-to-date study on all the "I am" statements. Ball's approach to Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John has changed how scholarship should approach them. Carson states that Ball "has simultaneously contributed to Johannine theology (and thus to biblical theology) and set forth a methodological rigor that must be emulated."[44] Consequently, it is Ball's work that influenced the way this dissertation approaches Jesus' "I am" statements in the Gospel of John.

The Historical Approaches to the Study of the "I Am" Statements

This section will briefly discuss the historical approaches to Jesus' ἐγώ εἰμι statements.[45] Beginning with parallels sought in the Greek world, G.P. Wetter studied the ἐγὼ εἰμι phrases in the Gospel of John first, then in the Synoptic Gospels, then Judaism, followed by the Septuagint,

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[41] Ball, 24.

[42] Ibid., 12. Ball admits that there have been articles that have come out on the "I am" statements but have not been exhaustively treated.

[43] Ibid.

[44] D. A. Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," ed. Craig A. Evans, *Bulletin for Biblical Research, Vol. 5* (1995): 33–34.

[45] A more exhaustive discussion of the history of the study of the "I am" statements can be found in Ball's work *I Am in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications,* 24-44.

and finally texts outside the Israelite religion.[46] Wetter argued for a connection between Jesus' "ἐγὼ εἰμι" statements in an Egyptian text[47] and from the *Leiden Papyri.*[48] He pointed out that these Egyptian texts contained "ἐγὼ εἰμι" and were used in an absolute sense.[49] Since that was the case, he argued that John's use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in his gospel should be understood from a non-Jewish background.[50] Wetter's proposal should be rejected because it is worth questioning whether the Apostle John would have been aware of or had access to Egyptian text. It seems to be highly unlikely. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the examples from these Egyptian texts are one-to-one parallels to the absolute uses of ἐγὼ εἰμι in the Gospel of John because the subject matter is completely different.[51]

Similarly, Adolf Deissmann quoted three Egyptian texts that contained the phrase "ἐγὼ εἰμι" and compared it to John 10:7-14. Two of these are from Isis inscriptions and the other example is from a "magic" based text that was produced in the fourth century AD.[52] Deissmann argued that these parallels were influential on the Septuagint and Christianity's use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in

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[46] G.P. Wetter, "Ich bin es," Eine Johanneische Formel, *TSK* 88 (1915), 224-238.

[47] Ibid., 233.

[48] Ibid., 233, 239.

[49] Ibid., 234.

[50] Wetter, 234.

[51] See: Ball, 25; Zimmermann, Das Absolute "Ego Eimi" als die neutestamentliche Offenbarungsformel', BZ4 (1960), 54-69, 266-76.

[52] Ball, 27.

the first person singular.[53] Deissmann's suggested parallels to the Gospel of John are highly speculative because there are no precise absolute use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in these texts.[54]

Some scholars advocated that the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John should be understood in conjunction with gnostic and Mandaic texts. Mandaeism is a religion similar to Gnosticism but claims to have its origin in Palestine.[55] One of the foundational teachings from Mandaeism is that spirit is opposed to matter. [56] Thus, the human soul is good but is trapped in a physical body, which is evil.[57] Consequently, the goal is for the human soul to return to its supreme entity (i.e., god).[58]

Rudolf Bultmann advocated that Mandaeism influenced the Gospel of John.[59] This was due to the frequency of revelatory speech in which the phrase "I am" occurs in Mandaean literature. For example, one text states, "The True Envoy *am I*, in whom there is no deceit" (*Right Ginza* II).[60] Bultmann argued that Jesus' use of 'living water,' 'bread of life,' 'true light,'

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[53] A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, (New York: George H. Doran, 1987), 141.

[54] Ball, 26.

[55] Catherine Clark Kroeger and Richard C. Kroeger, "Mandaeans," ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 523.

[56] Andrew Stephen Damick, *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy: Exploring Belief Systems through the Lens of the Ancient Christian Faith* (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2011), 166.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] R., Bultmann, 'Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen Mandaischen und Manichaischen Quellen fur das Verstandnis des Johannesevangeliums', *ZNW* 24 (1925): 115.

[60] M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza, der Schatz oder das grofie Buck der Mandder* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925), p. 58.

and ‘true vine’ stemmed from gnostic dualism.[61] Following in Bultmann’s footsteps was Eduard Schweizer, who made it part of his mission to discover how the “I am” statements in the Gospel of John were related to Mandaean literature. Schweizer pointed out that the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements with a metaphor in the Gospel of John surprisingly do not borrow from the frequent Old Testament imagery that was used for God, such as ‘Rock’ or ‘Shield.’[62]

Thus, Schweizer concluded that the lack of these concepts in the Gospel of John demonstrates that the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements should not find their parallels in the Old Testament.[63] Instead, he believed the closer parallels were found in Mandaean literature, which contains similar imagery in the Gospel, such as shepherd and vine.[64] Therefore, he concluded that the Apostle John relied on a Christian source who had strong ties to Mandaeism or relied on Mandaean texts while adding his own writing style.[65] However, Ball and other scholars exposed the dubious attempt to connect the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John to Mandaeism because most of Mandaic texts are dated in the eighth century AD.[66] Schweizer acknowledged this issue.[67] Thus,

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[61] R., Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, (translated by G.R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971, [1941]), 182.

[62] E. Schweizer, *Ego Eimi*, (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939), 37-38.

[63] Ibid., 38.

[64] Schweizer, 64.

[65] Ibid., 108.

[66] Ball, 30. See: E. W. Yamauchi, *Jewish Gnosticism? The Prologue of John, Mandaean Parallels, and the Trimorphic Protennoia',* in R. Van Den Broeck and M. J. Vermaseren, Studies is Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions: Festschrift Gilles Quispel (Leiden: Brill, 1981), p. 473. See also: E.W. Yamauchi, *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 68-89.

[67] Schweizer, 46.

he was forced to advocate for a Western origin for Gnosticism to date these texts to the writing of the Gospel of John to resolve this issue.[68] The evidence weighs heavily against this theory.[69]

Another background that scholars have drawn connections to the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements are from the Old Testament. Robert Lightfoot believed that the "I am" statements should be interpreted by their context. An example of this was his understanding of how ἐγὼ εἰμι should be translated in John 8:58 and John 13:19. Lightfoot advocated that ἐγὼ εἰμι is used in an absolute sense and is connected to passages such as Deuteronomy 32:39 and Isaiah 46:4, where ἐγὼ εἰμι is used similarly.[70] J. Richter took this idea further in his dissertation, arguing that אֲנִי הוּא is a fixed, divine revelation formula.[71] Richter concluded that אֲנִי הוּא is used by Yahweh to emphasize His absolute monotheism and "by its breadth and all-embracing significance the sum of all God's statements about Himself."[72] He argued that when Jesus used the phrase "ἐγὼ εἰμι" in the Gospel of John, it pointed back to the Old Testament, and Jesus was speaking as God.[73]

Heinrich Zimmerman examined the phrase אֲנִי יְהוָה, translated as "I am the LORD" (Isa 45:18), which he regarded as the revelation formula of the Old Testament.[74] Zimmerman linked אֲנִי יְהוָה with Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι based upon the Septuagint's translation of אֲנִי יְהוָה in Isaiah

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[68] Schweizer, 62. See: Wilson, Robert. "Nag Hammadi and the New Testament," New Testament Studies, vol. 28, (1982), p. 292, for an argument for a second-century origin of Gnosticism.

[69] Ball, 30.

[70] R.H., Lightfoot, *St John's Gospel*, edited by C.F. Evans, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 134.

[71] J. Richter, *Ani Hu und Ego Eimi,* (unpublished dissertation, University of Erlangen, 1956), 17.

[72] Ibid., 43.

[73] Ibid., 85.

[74] Heinrich Zimmermann, "*Das Absolute 'Ego Eimi' als die neutestamentliche Offenbarungsformel,*" *BZ* 4: (1960), 64-69.

45:18 with ἐγὼ εἰμι.[75] Ball notes that scholars such as Feuillet, Brown, Coetzee, and Harner believed that Deutero-Isaiah significantly influenced the understanding of the "I am" sayings.[76]

John Painter advocated that many of John's use of imagery in the gospel reflected the concept of the Law.[77] An example of this is the Law symbolized as bread (Sir 15:3; 24:19-21) and light (Ps 119:105).[78] Painter also saw a connection with the phrase "the way" (John 14:6), which is used in Deuteronomy to symbolize the Law (Deut 1:30-33; 5:32-33).[79] He also noted that Jesus' claim to be the true vine is tied to Old Testament passages such as Hosea 10:1, which states "Israel is a luxuriant vine."[80]

Margaret Davies argues that Jesus' "I am" statements should not be understood from the book of Isaiah but instead from the Wisdom declarations from Scripture (Prov 8:12-21; Sir 24:3-31).[81] Davies advocates that Jesus' "I am" statements are similar to Wisdom's declarations because there are similar images and concepts used (Prov 8:12-21; Sir 24:3-31).[82] She also suggests that the "I am" phrases in the Gospel of John do not assert His divinity.[83] However, this proposal should be rejected in light of Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John 8:58.

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[75] Zimmermann, 68.

[76] Ball, 34.

[77] J. Painter, *John: Witness and Theologian,* (London: SPCK, 1979), 39-40.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 41.

[80] Painter, 48.

[81] Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 87.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 84-85

C. H. Dodd looked towards Judaism to find parallels to the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John. In one Rabbinic text, he found that Pinchas ben Jair understood the phrase "אֲנִי הוּא" in Isaiah 52:6 to refer to God's name.[84] Dodd pointed to Isaiah 45:19 in the LXX, where the name of Yahweh was translated with ἐγὼ εἰμι, thus indicating that ἐγὼ εἰμι was used as a substitute for God's name.[85] He also found another Rabbi, Judah ben Ilai, who claimed that אֲנִי הוּא was understood as God's secret name even prior to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.[86] Dodd concluded that when Jesus uses ἐγὼ εἰμι, "the eternal glory of God is given to Christ, and in the same act the Name of God is glorified."[87] Ball comments that this is similar to the findings from J. Richter, Heinrich Zimmerman, and Ethelbert Stauffer.[88]

One proposed approach to understanding the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements is from the New Testament and early Christian writings. Edwin D. Freed argued that ἐγὼ εἰμι in the Gospel of John should be understood as a way to discuss Jesus' role as the Messiah.[89] He noted how the first occurrence of ἐγὼ εἰμι is made by John the Baptist to deny that he is the Christ (John

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[84] C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 94.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., 95.

[87] Dodd, 95.

[88] Ball, 37.

[89] Edwin D. Freed, "Ego Eimi in John 1:20 and 4:25." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1979): 288–91.

1:20).[90] Furthermore, Jesus' first use of ἐγὼ εἰμι occurs during a discussion of His identity as the Messiah in John 4:26.[91]

Freed tied this idea to Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of Mark when Jesus is asked if He is the Christ by the High Priest. Freed suggested that Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in Mark 14:62 should be understood as Jesus admitting that He is the Christ rather than using ἐγὼ εἰμι in an absolute sense.[92] He concluded that at least in John 1:20 and 4:26, ἐγὼ εἰμι is traditional Christian terminology that refers to Jesus as the Messiah.[93] This approach is limited because it only compares the use of ἐγὼ εἰμι from the Synoptic Gospels with two instances from the Gospel of John (John 1:20; 4:26).

C. K. Barrett believes there are multiple backgrounds in which to understand the "I am" sayings properly.[94] He argued that the best way to understand the "I am" statements with metaphors was by considering their Hellenistic influence.[95] Whereas, the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements without a metaphor were best understood from a Jewish perspective.[96] Similarly, Rudolf Schnackenburg argued that the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμι statements are best understood through the Old Testament.[97] However, he believed Hellenism influenced the form of the "I am" statements in

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[90] Freed, 290.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 291.

[94] Ball, 42.

[95] C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel of John and Judaism*, (London: SPCK, 1975), 292.

[96] Ibid., 342.

John. Schnackenburg states, “The formal structure of the revealer’s utterance was probably influenced by the soteriological type of discourse current in Eastern Hellenism.”[98] Ball notes other scholars who argue for multiple influences, such as Buhner and Ashton, who also advocated for a gnostic influence along with Judaism.[99] These approaches should also be rejected because the suggested parallels to these Hellenistic writings do not match Jesus’ use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in the Gospel of John.[100]

This brief review of the historical study "I am" in the Gospel of John highlights how many parallels that scholars have advocated were the proper way to understand the ἐγὼ εἰμι sayings in John. Additionally, this summary reveals that the research done on the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John has put too much emphasis on external factors rather than the Gospel of John itself. This has been a recurring pattern in recent research history. The attempt to ground Jesus’ use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in other literature has shown to be faulty because the *supposed* parallels differ in form, context, and function.[101] Ball’s work was extremely helpful in bringing this idea to the forefront.

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[97] R. Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to St John (3 vols.; London: Bums and Oates, 1968-1982), 86. See also Schulz, *Komposition,* p. 85-131, who sees a complex relationship between the content and form of the “I am” sayings and their respective origins.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ball, 43-44. See: Buhner, *Der Gesandte Und Sein Weg*, (WUNT, 2; Tubingen: Mohr, 1977), p. 166-180 and J. Ashton, Understanding the Fourth Gospel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 184-89.

[100] Ibid., 44.

[101] Ball, 160, 259-260.

Ball's Approach to the "I Am" Statements

Ball's book aimed to determine the usage of ἐγὼ εἰμι in the Gospel of John, both in terms of its literary function and its connection to the Old Testament.[102] Ball argues that the ἐγὼ εἰμι sayings reflected a consistent portrait of Jesus.[103] He also advocated that all the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements, though they may differ in form, still interact with one another and are unified.[104] The second part of Ball's study consists of his examination of the Old Testament background material implied in Jesus' words.[105] For example, he advocates that one needs to understand the entire context in which the phrase "אֲנִי הוּא," translated as "I am he" occurs (Isa 43:10).[106] Ball states, "The formulation and context of the words in John point back to the whole context of the words in Isaiah."[107]

Furthermore, Ball suggests that finding the exact phrase "ἐγὼ εἰμι" in the Old Testament is not necessary to make connections to Jesus' "I am" statements.[108] Instead, one should examine the ideas and concepts that Jesus uses in His ἐγὼ εἰμι declarations, which points the reader to the Old Testament.[109] Thus, Ball rightfully argued that the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements need to be understood

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[102] Ball, 255.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 257.

[105] Ball, 258.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 259.

[109] Ibid.

in light of the Old Testament rather than outside parallels, such as those in gnostic texts.[110] Ball summarizes it well, “Although the 'I am' sayings of Mandaism offer the closest formal similarities to John, they function in a quite different manner.”[111] This does not mean that the parallels found in outside literature are insignificant. Instead, it implies that the context of John should determine the way that Jesus uses “I am” in this Gospel.

Preview of the Upcoming Chapters and Format

In order to draw out the biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness, this dissertation will examine each ἐγὼ εἰμι statement within its respective pericope. Thus, the first section of each upcoming chapter will begin with a context section. Within this section, there will be a discussion of the historical context of each pericope that contains an ἐγὼ εἰμι statement. Furthermore, this section will consider the placement of each “I am” statement in the Gospel of John as a whole. Additionally, the context section will discuss certain literary features of the pericope when necessary. All these elements will help illuminate other parallels that John is creating concerning the rest of his gospel, the Old Testament, Judaism, and beliefs held in the first century AD. The next section of each chapter will have a commentary section for each passage. This will primarily include any exegetical findings that are pertinent to the biblical-theological theme of Jesus’ surpassing greatness. Finally, the last section of each chapter will

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[110] Ball, 259.

[111] Ibid. Furthermore, he states, “The 'I am' sayings of Mandaism talk about bread, light and shepherds in purely cosmic terms and as offering sustenance, enlightenment and care. The 'I am' sayings of John do not rule out this cosmic aspect, but are pregnant with meaning in their allusion to the Old Testament … thus specific and not purely cosmic.”

examine Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement(s) and discuss the implications related to the biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness.[112]

The upcoming chapters will examine all 14 of the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John, following their appearance in the text rather than their structure. Chapter two will explore the first three "I am" statements: John 4:1-26, John 6:16-21, and John 6:22-60. Chapter three will then cover four ἐγὼ εἰμι declarations found in John 8: John 8:12-20, John 8:21-24, John 8:25-30, and John 8:31-59. Chapter four will discuss three "I am" statements in John 10-11: the two ἐγὼ εἰμι declarations in John 10:1-21 followed by the one occurrence in John 11:1-44.

Chapter five will examine the "I am" statements in John 13-14, beginning with the pericope in John 13:1-19, followed by John 14:1-14. Chapter six will then explore the remaining two ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John 15 and 18: John 15:1-11 followed by John 18:1-11. Finally, chapter seven will summarize the findings of each ἐγὼ εἰμι statement and its connections to the biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness, as well as this dissertation's significance for Johannine scholarship.

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[112] It is worth noting that while reading through each chapter, there may be some overlap between the main sections of "Context, Commentary, and Biblical-Theological Implications." This is to be expected, as the topics discussed are often interconnected and may require revisiting in order to fully understand their significance.

Chapter 2

John 4:1-26

Context of John 4:1-26

The pericope of John 4:1-26 centers on a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. Prior to this conversation, Jesus learned that the Pharisees believed He was making and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist (John 4:1). However, John recorded that it was Jesus' disciples who were baptizing and not Jesus Himself (John 4:2). Jesus left Judea and headed towards Galilee (John 4:3). Verse four is crucial to the context of this story as John said, "And he had to pass through Samaria" (John 4:4).

Jesus traveled through Samaria because it was the shortest route to Galilee from Judea, as confirmed by Josephus in several writings (*Ant.* 20.118; *J.W.* 2.232; *Life,* 269).[113] John records that they came to Sychar in Samaria, near a field Jacob had given to Joseph (John 4:5). John further noted, "Jacob's well was there; so Jesus wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting by the well. It was a bout the sixth hour" (John 4:6). John then introduced a woman who came to draw water from the well (John 4:7a). Drawing water was traditionally done in the morning when temperatures were milder and served as a social activity for women.[114] This detail suggests the woman was ostracized for her infidelity or promiscuity (John 4:16-18).

Jesus initiated the conversation with the woman and said, "Give me a drink" (John 4:7b). John noted that the disciples left to get food from the city (John 4:8). Jesus' request surprised her

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[113] Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 532.

[114] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 217.

as she said, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (John 4:9a). John made sure that his audience would understand the tension as he noted, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (John 4:9b). The hostility between the Jews and Samaritans was well documented. For example, the Jews used “Samaritan” as a derogatory term towards Jesus (John 8:48). Furthermore, Luke recorded that John and James asked Jesus if they could call down fire on the Samaritans who rejected Jesus (Luke 9:51-54). Additionally, the book of Sirach, a Jewish writing from the second century BC, states, “Two nations my soul detests, and the third is not even a people: Those who live in Seir, and the Philistines, and the foolish people that live in *Shechem*” (Sir 50:25-26).[115] Shechem was a leading city of the Samaritans (*Ant*. 11.8.6).[116] Furthermore, Josephus recorded that when Jews from Galilee passed through Samaria to go to Jerusalem, they faced many types of dangers and even potential death (*Ant.* 20.118-124).[117]

The origin of the Samaritan people is challenging to determine due to the need for precise information. Most available information comes from the New Testament and other late sources, some of which contain Jewish propaganda. However, the Old Testament records that the Samaritan people are descendants of the Israelites who were not deported during Assyria's conquest of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kgs 17:24-41). Around 722 BC, the Assyrians conquered the northern part of Israel.[118] As a result, they repopulated this area with people from their

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[115] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Sir 50:25–26. Emphasis mine.

[116] Josephus and Whiston, 307.

[117] Ibid., 532.

[118] David T. Lamb, “Kings, First and Second Books of,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

empire.[119] The Israelites who remained in the Northern Kingdom intermarried with these people.[120] Thus, the Jews considered them as illegitimate Jews because they were unclean and went against God's Law (Deut 7:3; Ezra 7:2; Neh 10:30).

Over time, the tension and conflict between the Jewish and Samaritan communities escalated. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are accounts of the Jews returning from exile to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Ezra recorded that the Samaritans approached the Jewish leaders and said, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here." (Ezra 4:2). Although the Samaritan people offered help to the Jews rebuild, their help was rejected because they did not consider them to be part of Jewish people based on God's word (Deut 7:3; Ezra 4:3; 7:2; Neh 2:20; 10:30).[121] Thus, Ezra reported the Samaritans as adversaries of the Jews (Ezra 4:1-16). Furthermore, Josephus wrote that the Samaritan people were considered apostates, who only claimed to be Jewish when things were going well for the Israelites (*Ant.* 11.340-341).[122]

Around 400 BC, the Samaritans built a competing temple on Mount Gerizim because they refused to worship in Jerusalem.[123] Furthermore, the Samaritans supported Syrian rulers

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[119] Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, Second edition., vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 143.

[120] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I–XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 29, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 170.

[121] Kruse, 143.

[122] Josephus and Whiston, 307.

[123] Carson, 216.

against Israel during the second century BC.[124] In 128 BC, the Jewish High Priest set fire to the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim.[125] The Mishnah, a Jewish collection of oral and written works, shows the animosity between Jews and Samaritans, as one section states, "Samaritan women are deemed menstruants from their cradle" (*m. Nid.* 4:1).[126] Additionally, the Samaritans only accepted the first five books of the Hebrew Bible as canonical.[127] However, they used their own version of these books, known as the Samaritan Pentateuch, which includes variants that favor Samaritan ideologies, such as Mount Gerizim being the correct place to worship.[128] This summary exemplifies the intense tension between Jews and Samaritans.

Jesus responded to her reservations, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10). The phrase "living water" was a common phrase that would have brought to her mind natural, flowing water.[129] Thus, John recorded that she misunderstood Jesus, thinking He was referring to physical water (John 4:11).[130] She then said to Jesus, "Are you

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[124] Brown, 170.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 1082.

[127] Morris, 226.

[128] Ingrid, Hjelm, "The Samaritan and Jewish Versions of the Pentateuch: A Survey" *Religions* 11, no. 2020, 2: 85.

[129] See: Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 226; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 204; Carson, 218; Brown, 170.

[130] This is similar to Nicodemus' misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching (John 3:3-6).

greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock" (John 4:12, emphasis mine).

Josephus recorded that many Samaritans claimed Jewish descent through Joseph (*Ant.* 9.291; 11.340-341).[131] Thus, it is understandable why the woman refers to Jacob as their father (John 4:12). However, by the Law, the Samaritans were not Jewish, regardless of what they may have believed (Exod 34:16; Deut 7:3; Ezra 9:2). Jesus explained that He was offering more than just physical water; He was offering her spiritual water that leads to eternal life (John 4:13-14). The Samaritan woman was only focused on her immediate needs; she did not fully comprehend what Jesus was offering (John 4:15). Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband, and come back" (John 4:16). She replied by saying she did not have a husband (John 4:17a). Jesus then said: "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true" (John 4:17b-18). Jesus applauded her honesty but revealed the complete truth about this aspect of her life.[132]

The Samaritan woman responded, "Sir, I perceive you are a prophet" (John 4:19). Jesus' ability to provide supernatural details about her life fueled her belief in him as a prophet.[133] However, she did not think Jesus was one of the prophets of Israel. Since the Samaritans had their own accepted writings, the only prophet they anticipated was the one Moses mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:15. [134] Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me

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[131] Josephus and Whiston, 307.

[132] Carson, 221.

[133] Craig S. Keener, "John," in *John*, vol. 2A of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament*, edited by Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 39-40.

[134] Carson, 221.

from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen" (Deut 18:15). The Samaritans referred to this figure as the *Taheb,* which means "he who returns" or "he who restores."[135] Josephus wrote about a Samaritan man who proclaimed to others that he was the Taheb and proceeded to gather many Samaritans to Mount Gerizim to show sacred vessels from Moses (*Ant*. 18.85-86).[136] However, Pontius Pilate put a stop to them and killed many of them (*Ant.* 18.87).[137]

Then the Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place we ought to worship" (John 4:20). The Samaritans believed Mount Gerizim was the correct place to worship because God endorsed it in passages such as Deuteronomy 11:29 and 12:5.[138] Therefore, any later claim made outside of what is in their Pentateuch would be rejected by the Samaritans. Jesus emphasized that the physical location of worship will eventually become irrelevant (John 4:21). He then said that Samaritans "worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Jesus wanted to convey that salvation was connected to what God was doing through the Jewish people and not what the Samaritan's believed.[139]

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[135] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 256.

[136] Josephus and Whiston, 482. See: H. G. M. Williamson and M. Kartveit, "Samaritans," ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 835.

[137] Josephus and Whiston, 482.

[138] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 61.

[139] Borchert, 207.

Jesus told the woman that worship would not be limited to a specific location but be based on worshipping the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24). The woman responded that she was waiting for the Messiah to come since He would tell them all they needed to know (John 4:25). As mentioned, the "Messiah" that the Samaritans were looking for was known as the *Taheb* (Deuteronomy 18:15). Thus, their understanding of the Messiah would have been limited to a Mosaic, rather than a Davidic, understanding as believed by the Jewish people (2 Sam 7:11-16).[140] The woman expected the Messiah to come in the future; thus, she did not consider Jesus to be the *Taheb* at that moment (John 4:25).

John 4:1-26 Commentary

After analyzing the context, this section will discuss the interpretation of this passage. John wanted his audience to know that Jesus "*had* to pass through Samaria" (John 4:4, emphasis mine). John used the word δει, which is translated as "had." The occurrence of δει in John 4:4 is used "To indicate something that happened should by all means have happened."[141] John's use of δει in John 4:4 and throughout his Gospel implies that Jesus' journey through Samaria was a divine appointment (John 3:7, 14; 9:4; 10:16).[142] Thus, Jesus' conversation with this Samaritan woman was necessary (John 4:5ff).

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[140] Hannah S. An, "The Prophet Like Moses (Deut. 18:15–18) and the Woman at the Well (John 4:7–30) in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls" *The Expository Times*, 127, 10, (2015), 469-478.

[141] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 214.

[142] See: Carson, 216; Morris, 226; Brown, 169.

Jesus offered the woman living water (John 4:10). She may have thought Jesus was talking about normal running water or water used to provide ritualistic cleansing. [143] However, Jesus' living water was superior because it would lead to eternal life (John 4:14).[144] She desired to have what Jesus offered so she did not have to return to the well (John 4:15). Jesus revealed that He knew her relationship history; thus, she concluded that Jesus was a prophet (John 4:16-19). The woman asked where the proper place was to worship since the Jews and Samaritans disagreed (John 4:20). The sudden shift in topic is often interpreted as an attempt by the woman to avoid acknowledging her sin.[145] However, this idea is what D. A. Carson rightfully calls "psychologizing" the text.[146]

There is no need to see a drastic change in the topic because the woman would have been contemplating Jesus' offer of living water despite being unclean, a woman, and a Samaritan (John 4:9, 15-19). Thus, if her question could be answered, she would be able to get the living water Jesus was offering (John 4:14). Jesus told her that true worshippers *must* worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24). This is another instance of the use of δει, implying divine necessity.[147] This type of worship would begin now (John 4:23). Robert Mounce comments,

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[143] Morris., 230. He further comments, "It was "living water" that took away defilement and made acceptable worshipers out of unclean people."

[144] Ibid.

[145] See: Morris, 236; Borchert, 206.

[146] Carson, 221. He further explains, "many interpreters to suggest that the woman raises a disputed point of theology as a means to distract Jesus from the sin-question she find so embarrassing. It is always easier to talk theology than to deal with truth that is personally distressing … A simpler supposition is that the woman's discovery that Jesus is some kind of Jewish prophet prompts her to raise the outstanding point of theological contention between Jews and Samaritans."

[147] See: Carson, 216; Morris, 226; Brown, 169.

"Jesus brings the future into the present by declaring that at the present time those who truly worship the Father worship him 'in spirit and in truth.'"[148] Jesus taught her that worship was a matter of the heart through the Holy Spirit, not a specific location.[149]

This led to Jesus' first ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in this Gospel. Jesus said, "*I* who speak to you *am* he" (John 4:26, emphasis mine).[150] In the Greek text, Jesus' reply begins with "ἐγὼ εἰμι," followed by "ὁ λαλῶν σοι" (John 4:26, NA[28]). The English word "he" is supplied in most major English translations (ESV, NIV, NASB95, CSB). This means that Jesus' statement could be translated as, "I am, who is speaking to you."

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is Greater than Jacob or Any Prophet, and Racial Divisions

After examining this passage, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications from John 4:1-26. Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is greater than Jacob, any prophet, or racial divisions (John 4:26). This stems from the woman's question as she asked, "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" (John 4:12). Her question suggested that Jesus could not be comparable to Jacob. She would have thought about the land she lived in because Jacob purchased Samaria from Hamor, Shechem's father (Gen 33:18-20). Furthermore, she was at the well Jacob dug when he built an altar for God (Gen 33:20; John 4:12). Additionally, Jacob

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[148] Robert H. Mounce, "John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 413.

[149] The Holy Spirit would be given to all believers after Jesus' resurrection (i.e., John 7:39) and He (the Holy Spirit) guides them (believers) into all truth (i.e., John 14:17).

[150] This ἐγὼ εἰμι statement falls under the classification of no metaphor and a present participle. See: Chapter 1, 10. See also: David M. Ball, *I Am in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, (Sheffield, England: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1996), 168. The implications of this statement will be discussed further in the upcoming section "Biblical-Theological Implications."

exerted much effort and energy to dig this well. In comparison, Jesus offered her living water despite having anything to draw water (John 4:11).[151] The woman assumed Jacob was greater than Jesus because of all Jacob had done for her people. In contrast, she did not know much about Jesus (John 4:9).

However, Jesus is greater than Jacob because He offers living water (John 4:10). Nevertheless, she did not understand at first what Jesus was offering (John 4:11). The provision of water that she attributed to Jacob through the well, would, in the end, leave those who drink it to become thirsty again (John 4:9, 12-13). Even by her own admission, she would have to return to the well (John 4:15). In contrast, Jesus provides greater water than Jacob because it genuinely satisfies thirst and leads to eternal life (John 4:13-14).[152]

In the Old Testament, living water is described as a gift from God. For example, Yahweh declared through Jeremiah, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of *living waters*, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13, emphasis mine). The Israelites required living water to survive, which only God could provide. However, they chose to pursue things that could not even hold water.[153] Similarly, the woman pursued multiple relationships, only to become an outcast in her community (John 4:7, 18). Like Yahweh, Jesus offered the woman living water, rightfully putting Him on equal ground with Yahweh (Jer 2:13; Zech 14:8; John 1:1-18; John 4:13-14). Thus, Jesus is greater than Jacob because, as God, He

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[151] Carson, 219.

[152] Ibid., 220.

[153] Michael L. Brown, "Jeremiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Jeremiah–Ezekiel (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 90.

could offer her something that nothing or no one else could ever provide: forgiveness and eternal life (John 4:13-14).

Jesus is also greater than the woman's expectations that Jesus was a prophet. Jesus revealed that He knew of her broken past (John 4:17-18). Thus, she understood that Jesus was at *least* a prophet (John 4:19). Even after discussing the proper place of worship, she was still unsure if He was Messiah (John 4:19-25). Her understanding of the Messiah was based on Deuteronomy 18:18,[154] which states, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

However, Jesus is more significant than her expectations because He is more than just a prophet. He is God, Creator, Life, Savior, Lamb of God, Messiah, and King (John 1:1-12, 29, 36, 49). Furthermore, when a prophet of God spoke, they would first receive a word from the Lord (Jer 1:4). Jesus is greater than any prophet because He is the Word (John 1:1-3). Additionally, Jesus became human and revealed who God is to humanity more significantly than all the prophets who came before Him (John 1:14, 18). The woman was looking toward the arrival of Messiah to receive all her answers (John 4:25). Thus, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement confirms that He is the Messiah and is superior to her own expectations (John 4:25-26).

Jesus is also *greater* than the racial divisions created by the Jews and Samaritans (John 4:9). At this time, the Samaritans and the Jews were fervently expecting the Messiah to show up and deliver His people (John 1:20-21; 4:25).[155] However, the Samaritans and Jews held different

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[154] Morris, 236.

[155] Borchert, 206.

beliefs, one of which pertained to the proper place of worship for God. (John 4:21-24). Historically, the Jews worshipped in Jerusalem because God told David and Solomon to build the temple there (1 Kgs 8:16, 29; 9:3).[156] In contrast, the Samaritans' believed worship was to take place at Mount Gerizim (Deut 11:29; 27:12).[157]

However, Jesus taught that worship should be carried out in spirit and *truth* (John 4:21-24). Later in this Gospel, Jesus offers a "drink," which causes the hearts of those who drink it to "flow rivers of *living water*" (John 7:38, emphasis mine). John commented that Jesus referred to the Spirit (John 7:39a). Therefore, this means worshipping in spirit and truth is carried out by the Holy Spirit in believers (John 4:21-24). Thus, the location of worship would no longer be the focal point, opening the way for even a Samaritan woman to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

Furthermore, after Jesus' "I am" statement (John 4:26), the disciples came back from getting food (John 4:27a). John recorded that the disciples "marveled" Jesus was talking to a woman (John 4:27b). The Greek word that is translated as 'marveled' is "θαυμάσης," which means "to be surprised or to wonder."[158] The disciples reacted like this because it was not usual for a rabbi to speak with a woman alone.[159] The disciples had questions for the woman and Jesus, but they did not express them (John 4:27c). They wanted to find out what the woman was

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[156] Burge, 146.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ardnt et al., 444.

[159] Morris, 242.

seeking from Jesus (John 4:27c). However, this pericope demonstrates that Jesus *sought* her out (John 4:4). Jesus had told the woman earlier, God was *seeking* true worshippers (John 4:23).

When she started to realize who Jesus was, she told others, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (John 4:28-29). The word μήτι, translated as "can," is a marker that "invites a negative response to the question that it introduces."[160] The use of μήτι implies that she was not entirely convinced that Jesus was the Messiah at that *moment*. However, her life appeared to have been changed by her encounter with Jesus. This is evident because she left her water jar[161] to proclaim Jesus to her community (John 4:28-29). Before this, she was drawing water at noon and ashamed about her past (John 4:7, 18). In comparison, she was telling others her testimony, causing them to believe in Jesus (John 4:39).

While it is true that salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22b), it is not only for the Jews, as He came to offer living water (eternal life) to those who are willing to receive it by faith in Him (John 4:14b). Earlier in the Gospel, John wrote that "God so loved the *world* that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus removed the need for a specific location to worship God because true worship can happen anywhere through faith in Him as the Messiah (John 4:23-26; 7:37-39). Thus, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in John 4:26 also demonstrates that He is greater than racial and cultural divisions.

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[160] Ardnt, et al., 649.

[161] Even though water was what she came to the well for in the first place!

John 6:16-21

Context of John 6:16-21

Jesus' next ἐγὼ εἰμι statement occurs within John 6:16-21. Before this pericope, Jesus was near the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1). Jesus had a heated discussion with the Jewish leaders about His authority after healing an invalid man on the Sabbath (John 5). However, it is unclear how much time passed between John 5 and John 6.[162] John noted that there was a large crowd who followed Jesus because of the signs He was performing (John 6:2). He also mentioned that this narrative took place right before the Passover (John 6:4).

As the large crowd approached Jesus, He asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat" (John 6:5). John gave insight into Jesus' question as he wrote, "He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:6). Jesus fed 5000 people from five loaves and two fish (John 6:9-13). After the people ate, they declared, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14). John then wrote that the people "were about to come and take him by force to make Him their king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself" (John 6:15).

The prior verses set the context for John 6:16-21. John wrote, "When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea" (John 6:16). John pointed out that Jesus was not with the disciples when they got into a boat to head towards Capernaum (John 6:17). After the disciples traveled a few miles on the Sea of Galilee, a violent storm suddenly arose (John 6:18-19a). The

[162] Klink, 302.

disciples were caught in a winter windstorm, a common occurrence on the Sea of Galilee.[163] These types of storms originate from the east, off the Golan Heights, a volcanic plateau that spans 40 miles in length and 16 miles in width.[164] Furthermore, the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee is surrounded by mountains that funnel wind into the sea.[165] Additionally, the Sea of Galilee is 600 feet below sea level.[166] Thus, when the cold air from the mountains and warm air from the sea combine, it creates violent storms.[167]

John commented that the disciples saw Jesus coming towards them, and they were afraid (i.e., John 6:19b). Based on the conditions, it is hard to imagine that the disciples knew it was Jesus at *first*.[168] This led to Jesus declaring, "It *is I*; do not be afraid" (John 6:20b, emphasis mine).[169] Then the disciples took Jesus into the boat and made it to their destination (John 6:21). There is a similar account to this narrative found in Matthew 14:22-32 and Mark 6:45-52. However, each account is not identical, as different details are included in each one.[170] It is vital

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[163] Gordon Franz, "What Type of Storms Did Jesus Calm: Wind or Rain?," in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle, Lexham Geographic Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 177.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Grant R. Osborne, *John: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer et al., Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 151.

[166] Carson, 274.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Morris, 308.

[169] This contains Jesus' second ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. It contains no metaphor and is used in an absolute sense. See: Ball, 168. The implications of this statement will be further drawn out in the "Biblical-Theological Implications" section.

[170] An in-depth discussion of the differences will not be discussed as it is outside of the scope of this dissertation.

to consider that the storm recorded in John 6:16-21 must have been severe to make the disciples afraid, given that many of them were experienced fishermen before following Jesus. Moreover, their boat was likely a small fishing vessel; thus, it was not designed to handle severe weather conditions.[171]

John 6:16-21 Commentary

After discussing the context of John 6:16-21, this section will deal with the interpretation of this passage. John does not explicitly mention why the disciples left for Capernaum (John 6:16). John chose to focus on what happened as they traveled across the Sea of Galilee.[172] According to a similar account in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus sent the disciples away while He went to pray to the Father (Matt 14:22-23; Mark 6:45-46). Although John did not write that Jesus went to pray, it can be inferred that the pressure of the crowd attempting to make Him king would lead Him to send the disciples away while He prayed (John 6:15).[173] Interestingly, John wrote, "It was now dark, and Jesus *had not yet come to them*." (John 6:17, emphasis mine). This verse implies that John assumed that his audience had some knowledge of this story when he wrote his Gospel.[174] It is unlikely that the disciples were expecting Jesus to come to them in such conditions (John 6:18).[175]

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[171] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 128.

[172] Morris, 308.

[173] Carson, 274.

[174] Michaels, 354.

[175] Morris, 308.

John continued and said, “When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat” (John 6:19). It is remarkable to consider that Jesus was able to walk on water despite the severe conditions of a storm on the Sea of Galilee. [176] The Greek text provides evidence that Jesus walked on water. John used the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, which is in the genitive form; thus, it is translated as “on the sea” (John 6:19; Rev 10:5).[177] Carson convincingly states, “If the disciples simply saw Jesus walking *by* the lake, it is hard to imagine why they were terrified. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Synoptists and John alike portray this event as a miracle.”[178]

As Jesus walked toward the disciples, He made an ἐγὼ εἰμι statement (John 6:20). However, this “I am” statement in John 6:20 is not readily identifiable in English since most major translations take ἐγὼ εἰμι and translate it as, “It is I” (ESV, NIV, NASB95, CSB). However, Jesus’ ἐγὼ εἰμι statement is grammatically absolute, acting as a standalone phrase.[179] John noted that once Jesus was brought in the boat, the disciples made it to their destination *immediately* (John 6:21). John used the word εὐθέως, which means immediately; thus, if εὐθέως is understood literally, this would suggest that the disciples arrived in Capernaum instantaneously.[180] However, John may have written this to convey that the disciples made it to Capernaum unaffected by the storm after Jesus got into the boat.[181]

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[176] Franz, 177.

[177] Carson, 274.

[178] Ibid. Emphasis original.

[179] See: Ball, 170.

[180] Klink, 313.

[181] See: Carson, 274; Klink 313.

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is Greater than the Sea and Is the Great I AM

After examining this passage, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications tied to Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John 6:20. Jesus' "I am" statement in this pericope demonstrates that Jesus is greater than the sea. One must consider the setting of this narrative: the disciples were caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee that could have killed them. Furthermore, John intentionally mentioned that this narrative occurred near the Passover (John 6:4). Thus, this would have brought up the associated stories of this event, specifically the Exodus.[182]

Yahweh established the Passover as a commemoration of His deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exod 12:1-20). After God struck down all the firstborn children and livestock in Egypt, the Egyptians urged the Israelites to leave them immediately (Exod 12:29-33). Once the Israelites departed Egypt, Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, causing him to pursue them, resulting in the Israelites being trapped at the edge of the Red Sea (Exod 14:1-9). The Israelites were stuck with no apparent escape route. Thus, the Israelites cried out to Moses because they were on the brink of losing their lives and were afraid (Exod 14:11-12). Moses told the Israelites not to fear because "The LORD will fight for you, and you only have to be silent" (Exod 14:13-14). God then had Moses stretch out his staff to divide the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross on dry ground while the Egyptians would be swallowed by the sea (Exod 14:15-18).

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[182] Carson, 268. He further comments, "his reason for including this aside is not so much chronological as theological." See: Stephen S. Kim, "The Christological And Eschatological Significance Of Jesus' Passover Signs In John 6," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (2007): 320.

Yahweh's presence surrounded the Israelites, so they made it safely to the other side, while the Egyptians were defeated by Him (Exod 14:19-31).

Likewise, in John 6:16-21, the disciples faced an obstacle similar to the Israelites in the Exodus: the sea. However, the disciples were on a boat, while the Israelites could not cross the Red Sea alone. Still, the sea was the primary obstacle in both accounts. When the Israelites were stuck at the edge of the Red Sea, Yahweh instructed Moses to stretch out his staff so that the sea would be divided (Exod 14:16). In comparison, Jesus is superior because He can walk on the sea, even during a severe storm (John 6:18-19).

Furthermore, the Israelites and disciples feared they would lose their lives (Exod 14:10; John 6:19). Yahweh intervened in their dire situation and brought them safely to their destination (Exod 14:19-25). Likewise, the disciples were glad to take Jesus into the boat and made it safely to their destination (John 6:21). The account in Exodus 14:29-31 emphasizes that it is all because of God that the Israelites were saved.[183] Similarly, Asaph recounted God's work during the Exodus and wrote, "He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid" (Ps 78:53a). Additionally, in Psalm 107, the psalmist reflects on how God overruled the sea and said, "Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven" (Ps 107:30). These passages from the Psalms are analogous to what occurs in John 6:16-21 as Jesus led the disciples to their destination safely (John 6:21).[184]

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[183] Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 529.

[184] See: Borchert, 259; Morris, 310; Carson, 276.

Moreover, the Israelites understood the sea to be a chaotic place. They believed the sea was part of a three-tiered universe: the heavens, the earth, and the sea (Ps 135:6, Rev 14:7).[185] Leland Ryken comments that they believed the sea symbolized "the continued threat the forces of chaos pose against God and creation."[186] Furthermore, the Old Testament mentions the "Leviathan," a great sea monster that God will one day destroy (Job 3:8; 41:1; Ps 74:14; 104:26; Isa 27:1). The Leviathan was also known in ancient Near Eastern mythology as a figure of chaos that dwelled in the sea.[187] In many ancient near Eastern mythologies, the sea was a place where there were struggles between the sea and various deities.[188] The Greco-Romans believed the sea was "living" and associated it with important deities, such as Neptune or Poseidon, known for their violent power.[189] This briefly summarizes how ancient people viewed the sea as a place of chaos.

In contrast to these beliefs, the sea is no obstacle for Jesus. He demonstrates His greatness by walking on the sea, unaffected by the storm (John 6:19). In the book of Job, God is the one who is said to have "trampled the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8b). Job also wrote that, "By his power stilled the sea" (Job 26:12). In a similar way, Jesus trampled the waves of the sea (John

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[185] Leland Ryken et al., "Sea," *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 765.

[186] Ibid. Ryken notes passages such as Job 38:8-11 and Jeremiah 5:22 that illustrates the sea attempting to push God's boundaries of creation.

[187] Douglas Mangum and Matthew James Hamilton, "Leviathan," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[188] William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 554.

[189] Malina and Rohrbaugh, 128.

6:18-19). Furthermore, in Psalm 107, the psalmist recounts how Yahweh has saved the Israelites from various troubles. Specifically, the psalmist mentioned that the Israelites were in trouble in the midst of the sea, but they cried out for help, and Yahweh delivered them (Ps 107:22-28). The psalmist wrote that Yahweh "made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired *haven*" (Ps 107:29-30, emphasis mine). These Old Testament passages highlight God's dominion over the sea and how He brought His people safely through it. Like Yahweh, Jesus demonstrated His dominion over the sea in John 6:16-21 showing He was more powerful than the sea and provided safety for His disciples.

Additionally, Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in this passage hints at a theophany (John 6:20). A theophany is a manifestation of God to man.[190] For instance, God manifested Himself to the Israelites in a pillar of cloud and fire (Exod 14:24). God's appearances were often accompanied by natural forces that terrified people, such as lightning, thunder, and raging storms (Deut 4:12; 5:22).[191] Furthermore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι declaration in John 6:20 is a call back to the name that God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14.[192] The Hebrew word used for "I AM" in Exodus 3:14 is "אֶהְיֶה," which is linked to the personal name "יהוה" in Exodus 3:15.[193]

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[190] Tremper Longman, "Theophany," edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 681.

[191] M. F. Rooker, "Theophany," ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 860.

[192] Grant Macaskill, "Name Christology, Divine Aseity, and the I Am Sayings in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 12, no. 2 (2018): 229.

[193] W. K. Bechtold III, "I Am Who I Am," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

In the Old Testament, God called His people not to fear (Gen 15:1; 26:24; 46:3; Deut 20:1; Josh 8:1; 10:8; Judg 6:10). The primary reason was due to God being present in the situation.[194] Similarly, as Jesus approached the disciples, He said, "It is I [ἐγὼ εἰμι]*, do not be afraid*" (John 6:20, emphasis mine). Thus, Jesus makes an "I am" statement that, when coupled with events in John 6:16-21, suggests a type of theophany.[195] John emphasized Jesus' deity from the beginning of his Gospel (John 1:1-3). Therefore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in John 6:20 illustrates that He is greater than the sea because He has dominion over it and identifies Him with the Great I AM.

John 6:22-60

Context of John 6:22-60

Jesus' next ἐγὼ εἰμι statement follows shortly after the previous pericope (John 6:16-21). John began to set the stage as he wrote, "On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone" (John 6:22). Since that was the case, the crowd expected to find Jesus near where He multiplied the food (John 6:1-15).
Since they could not find Jesus, they began to search for Him (John 6:24).

The crowd eventually found Jesus in Capernaum and said to Him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" (John 6:25). Rabbi was a common way to refer to a respected teacher.[196] However,

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[194] See: Kim, 320; Klink, 312.

[195] Borchert, 258–259.

[196] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Jesus as Rabbi in the Fourth Gospel," ed. Evans Craig A., *Bulletin for Biblical Research, Vol. 8* (1998): 100.

the crowd addressing Jesus as Rabbi is odd because the day before, they wanted to make Him king (John 6:15).[197] This is because they believed that Jesus was the Prophet who was to come into the world (John 6:14). The people were referring to what Moses declared in Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a *prophet* like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen" (Deut 18:15, emphasis mine).

However, it becomes clear that they desired someone who would provide them with earthly success (John 6:26ff).[198] Thus, Jesus told them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves" (John 6:26). Jesus challenged them, "Do not work for food that perishes but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal" (John 6:27). In this culture since many people were illiterate, seals were used to authenticate things or claim ownership.[199] Thus, the people would have known that Jesus was claiming to have authority.[200]

Nevertheless, the crowd asked Jesus to provide a sign for them so He could prove He was worthy to earn their faith (John 6:30). They quoted Scripture to Him saying, "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (John 6:31). The crowd was referring to different passages from the Old Testament which talk about manna (Exod 16:15; Num 11:7-9; Neh 9:15). Jesus responded, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not

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[197] Morris, 316.

[198] Morris., 306.

[199] Ibid., 317.

[200] Klink, 327.

Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (John 6:32). Jesus' reply revealed they had an incorrect assumption that Moses gave them manna.[201] Jesus wanted to show the crowd how to understand the Scripture they quoted.[202] Jesus said, "For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33). The crowd then asked Jesus to always give them this bread (John 6:34). This leads to Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, as He says, "*I am* the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35, emphasis mine).[203]

After Jesus' teaching, John noted that the crowd was offended because Jesus said He came from heaven (John 6:32-41). The crowd falsely assumed that since they knew Jesus' earthly family, they could dismiss His claim to be from heaven (John 6:42). Jesus responded, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:43-44a). Jesus quoted Isaiah 54:13 to illustrate that only whom God teaches will come to Him (John 6:45). Ironically, the people called Jesus "Rabbi" but refused to listen to His teaching (John 6:25).

Jesus then said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). The idea of eating flesh or drinking blood would be repulsive to a Jewish person because God forbade partaking in such activity (Gen 9:4;

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[201] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition., The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 148.

[202] Thompson, 148.

[203] This is Jesus' third ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John (i.e., John 6:35, 48, 51). This is the first one containing a metaphor. These types of "I am" statements contain conceptual parallels from the Old Testament that give proper background to understand the metaphors in these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements. See: Chapter 1, 8-9; Ball, 166. The implications from this statement will be drawn out in the "Biblical-Theological Implications" section.

Lev 17:10-11; Deut 12:23). This repulsiveness is seen in the response to Jesus, as the crowd said, "this is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60). The pericope ends as John noted that this pericope took place in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:59). These types of synagogue exchanges are also seen in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 4:23; 12:9-14; Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:16-28).

John 6:22-60 Commentary

After discussing the context of John 6:22-60, this section will deal with the interpretation of this passage. The crowd's misunderstanding of the identity of Jesus is paramount in this pericope. The people only sought Jesus for food that was temporary instead of food that lasted for eternal life (John 6:27). Jesus taught that the Father "set his seal" on Him (John 6:27). This phrase is a translation from the Greek verb "ἐσφράγισεν," meaning "to confirm or authenticate."[204] Thus, the Father has sealed Jesus and gave Him the authority to provide eternal life to those who believe in Him (John 6:27).[205]

Nevertheless, the crowd still wanted to know how they could start doing the "works of God" (John 6:28). Jesus taught that faith in Him is the only necessary work (John 6:29). Edward Klink rightfully says, "The duties and responsibilities of humanity are entirely eclipsed by this one task of trusting in the person and work of the Son."[206] Yet, the crowd challenged Jesus to perform a sign (John 6:30-31). They wanted Jesus to act similarly to Moses, thus providing bread

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[204] Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 413.

[205] Klink, 327.

[206] Klink, 328.

for them and performing miraculous signs.[207] On the contrary, Jesus wanted them to know that He could give them true food and drink, leading to spiritual sustenance (Deut 8:3; John 6:35).

Jesus explained that the crowd did not believe in Him (John 6:36). However, the Father has given Him people who do believe, and He will never cast them out (John 6:37). Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). He explains that the will of the Father is that He shall lose none of those who are given to Him, but instead they shall have eternal life (John 6:39-40). These verses emphasize the Father's will (John 6:38-40).[208] Which was that Jesus would come to earth and save all those that the Father has given to Him (John 6:29).[209]

Jesus emphasized to the unbelievers that they needed Him as the "bread of life" (John 6:48). Thus, Jesus said, "Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died" (John 6:49). In contrast, those who eat the bread of heaven will not die (John 6:50). Jesus further explained what the bread of heaven was as He said, "And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:51c). This leads the Jews to take offense to Jesus' teaching because they thought He was teaching that they would eat His flesh (John 6:52, 60). The situation became more complex when Jesus taught that eternal life is granted only to those who partake in His flesh and blood (John 6:53-58).

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[207] Carson, 285.

[208] Morris, 326.

[209] Carson, 292.

The crowd severely misunderstood the meaning of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood. The phrase "flesh and blood" is a Jewish idiom that refers to the whole person.[210] Thus, Jesus taught that they need to receive Him fully.[211] Therefore, Jesus uses the imagery of eating and drinking to communicate that His disciples are to be in a committed, daily relationship with Him by faith (John 6:40; 54).[212] However, some of His disciples did not comprehend what He meant. John records that some of his disciples said, "This is a *hard* saying; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60, emphasis mine). The word σκληρός, which is translated as "hard," means "something that is difficult to accept" in this context.[213] Thus, many of the disciples stopped following Jesus (John 6:66).

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is Greater than Manna

After discussing the pericope, this section will focus on the biblical-theological implications of this passage. Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements demonstrate that He is greater than manna for several reasons (John 6:35, 48, 51). The crowd referred to manna as the "bread from heaven" (John 6:31). Manna is first introduced in Exodus 16. The Israelites complained because they did not have bread and meat as they had in Egypt (Exod 16:3). Yahweh told Moses, "I am about to rain bread down from heaven" (Exod 16:4). God provided and sustained the Israelites for 40 years with manna (Exod 16:35).

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[210] Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I–XII),* 282.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Carson, 297. He explains, "Both the feeding miracle and the Lord's table, rightly understood, parabolically set out what it means to receive Jesus Christ by faith. Both Augustine and Cranmer have it right."

[213] Silva, 314.

Manna was also a daily provision that God gave to the Israelites (Exod 16:4). Thus, the Israelites had to trust God for it each day, except for a double portion on Friday so they had enough for the Sabbath (Exod 16:5). Additionally, some of the Jewish people expected manna to be given again through the Messiah.[214] One example is from 2 Baruch, which associates the coming of the Messiah with a "treasury of manna … from on high" (2 Bar. 29:8).[215] Thus, explaining why the crowd asked Jesus to give them something similar to manna (John 6:31).

Nevertheless, even though the Israelites ate the "bread of heaven," they eventually died (Num 14:33; Josh 5:6; John 6:49). While manna physically sustained the Israelites, its consumption did not lead to spiritual sustenance (Deut 8:3). Thus, Jesus told the crowd, "Do not work for food that perishes" (John 6:27a). The word ἀπολλυμένην, which is translated as "perishes" means, "things be lost, pass away, be ruined" in this context.[216] This concept is vividly illustrated when the Israelites gathered too much manna in Exodus 16:20, which states, "Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank."

In comparison, Jesus is greater than the manna because He is the *true* bread of heaven (John 6:32). The word ἀληθινόν, translated as "true," means "real, genuine, authentic" in this context.[217] In the Greek text, ἀληθινόν is an emphatic position.[218] Thus, manna has been

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[214] See: Klink, 329; Burge, 197.

[215] James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 631.

[216] Arndt et al., 116.

[217] Ibid., 43.

[218] Brown, 262.

superseded by Jesus, who is the true bread of life (John 6:32). Moreover, the bread that Jesus offers does not perish but leads to eternal life (John 6:27, 35).

Furthermore, Jesus is superior to manna because He does not need to be given daily (Exod 16:4). Instead, Jesus offers Himself fully, once and for all, so that those who believe in Him will have the true bread of life (John 3:16; 6:51). Thus, believers can have a daily, fully committed relationship with Jesus (John 6:29, 56).[219] While the Jews anticipated manna to come again (John 6:31; 2 Bar 29:8), Jesus revealed that it is His Father who *gives* (i.e., presently) the bread of heaven (John 6:32-33).[220] Lastly, Jesus is greater than manna because He offers Himself for the *world* and not only for the Israelites (John 3:16; 6:33).

Jesus Is Greater than Moses

Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in this pericope also demonstrate that He is greater than Moses (John 6:35, 48, 51). Jesus is the one who brought up Moses to the crowd after they requested Him to perform a sign (John 6:30-32). Jesus taught that it was not Moses who gave them manna; instead, it was the Father (John 6:32). Thus, they mistakenly gave Moses credit for their ancestors receiving manna (John 6:31).[221] However, the manna given under Moses' leadership was temporary (John 6:49). In comparison, Jesus, as the bread of life, provides everlasting sustenance, which is only found in Him (John 6:27, 35, 49-51).

Jesus is also greater than Moses because He is the one that Moses prophesied about (Deut 18:18; John 6:14). Moses told the Israelites that Yahweh would raise up someone like him whom

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[219] Carson 297.

[220] Klink, 329.

[221] Brown, 262.

they *needed* to listen to (Deut 18:15-18). The people were expecting Jesus to act similarly to Moses, which is why they pursued Him (John 6:25-26, 30-31).[222] Furthermore, Jesus told the Jews, "There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope" (John 5:45). Jesus attempted to correct their misplaced hope by reminding them that Moses wrote about Him; thus, He supersedes Moses (John 5:46). Jesus is the heavenly mediator, who alone who provides eternal life (John 6:51).

Additionally, the use of ἐγώ εἰμι would bring up a connection to the divine name of Yahweh (Exod 3:14-15).[223] Moreover, Jesus made similar claims to those that Yahweh made. For example, in Isaiah 55, Yahweh invited the thirsty and hungry to partake in what He offered at no cost (Isa 55:1). He also rebukes the Israelites for pursuing things that are not life-giving or able to satisfy (Isa 55:2). Yahweh pleaded for His people to listen so they could experience the everlasting covenant He made with David (Isa 55:3).

Similarly, Jesus also warns against those who pursue things that perish (Isa 55:2; John 6:27a). Like Yahweh, Jesus invites people to come to Him so they can experience true satisfaction (Isa 55:1-3; John 6:35). Furthermore, Jesus is the proper object of faith (Isa 55:3; John 6:27c, 40, 47). Carson rightfully points out that Isaiah 55 "deals explicitly with the dawning of eschatological salvation, of a new and everlasting covenant, in the context of the word which effectively proceeds from the mouth of God" (Isa 55:3, 11).[224] Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1). Faith in Yahweh was always the true path to righteousness (Gen 15:6). Now, that faith is

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[222] See: Keener, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 60; Brown, 262; Thompson, 148.

[223] See: Macaskill, 229; Bechtold III, "I Am Who I Am;" Morris, 309-310.

[224] Carson, 289.

correctly placed in Jesus, the Son of God, who provides true life (John 1:1-4, 12-14, 18; 6:27, 29, 33, 35, 37-40, 44-51, 52-58). Thus, Jesus' "I am" statements in this pericope demonstrate that He is greater than Moses.

Chapter 3

John 8:12-20

Context of John 8:12-20

Jesus' following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement takes place in John 8:12. The preceding pericope narrates the story of a woman who was caught in adultery and brought to Jesus (John 7:53-8:11). Most English translations comment that this pericope is not found in many early Greek manuscripts.[225] Robert Mounce suggests John 7:53-8:11 records a historical event but was added later to prevent misinterpretation.[226] On the contrary, D. A. Carson argues that despite the supposition that this story is factual, it remains a challenge to establish John as the author.[227] Assuming that John 7:53-8:11 was not originally part of the manuscripts, John 8:12-20 can be considered a continuation of John 7:37.

John recorded that it was the "last day of the feast, the great day" (John 7:37). John is referring to the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2). This festival originates from when God directed the Israelites to construct booths using palm trees, branches, willows, and fruit (Lev 23:40). The purpose of this was for the Israelites to remember their time living in tents after being saved from

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[225] The following MSS do not include John 7:53-8:11: Western Uncial D, Bodmer Papyrus, Old Syriac Curetonian, Old Syriac Sinaiticus, and the Coptic manuscripts. For a full list of manuscripts see: Metzger, Bruce Manning, United Bible Societies. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)*. London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994, 187. A complete discussion of all the textual issues from this passage is outside the scope of this dissertation. See: Metzger, 187-189 for an excellent starting point on this topic.

[226] Robert H. Mounce, "John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 469. The misinterpretation that Mounce states is assuming that Jesus would allow promiscuity. See: Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 238.

[227] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 333.

Egypt (Lev 23:43). According to Josephus, the Feast of Tabernacles was "a most holy and most eminent feast" (*Ant.* 8.100).[228] The Feast of Tabernacles required all Israelites to participate in annually in Jerusalem (Zec 14:16). There were two other feasts everyone was expected to attend: the Passover and Pentecost.[229]

As time passed, new elements were incorporated into the Feast of Tabernacles, including a ceremony where water from the Pool of Siloam was poured out as a libation.[230] Another addition is recorded in the *Mishnah*, which discusses the lighting of four large golden bowls near the Court of Women, producing enough light to illuminate Jerusalem (*m. Sukkah* 5:2-3).[231] Thus, the Feast of Tabernacles significantly emphasized water and light.[232] The prominence of light was connected to the Israelites remembering the pillar of fire that guided them through the wilderness.[233] The emphasis on water commemorated God providing water from a rock during the wilderness wanderings.[234]

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[228] Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 219.

[229] David Wenham and Steve Walton, *Exploring the New Testament: The Gospels and Acts*, vol. 1 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2001), 35. Wenham and Walton note that the other festivals were celebrated from home.

[230] J. P. Lewis, "Feasts," edited by Moisés Silva and Merrill Chapin Tenney, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, D-G* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 2009), 563.

[231] Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 288.

[232] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 386.

[233] Grant Osborne, Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 13: John and 1, 2, and 3 John* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 112. See: Carson, 338; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 295.

[234] Burge, 255.

Jesus' statement captures this emphasis on light, as He said, "*I am* [ἐγὼ εἰμι] the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).[235] The Pharisees objected, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true" (John 8:13). They were appealing to Mosaic Law as the reason they were rejecting Jesus' claim (Deut 19:15; John 8:12-13). Similarly, the Mishnah stated that testimony on one's own behalf was not valid (*m. Ketub.,* 2.9f).[236] Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus told the Jews that the Father testifies on His behalf (John 5:31-32). John noted that Jesus taught this in the temple's treasury, which was near the Court of Women (John 8:20).[237]

John 8:12-20 Commentary

After examining the context of John 8:12-20, this section will deal with the interpretation of this passage. The Pharisees rejected Jesus' claim in John 8:12 because they thought He was testifying on His own behalf (John 8:13). Jesus responded, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going" (John 8:14). Jesus wanted the Pharisees to know that He had the authority to bear witness about Himself.[238] The Pharisees did not understand who Jesus was because their judgment was subject to the σάρξ "flesh" (John 8:14-15).[239] This is the only place in the Gospel of John that σάρξ is used as a

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[235] This is Jesus' fourth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in this Gospel. This is the second one that contains a metaphor. These types of "I am" statements contain conceptual parallels from the Old Testament that give proper background to understand the metaphors in these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements. See: Chapter 1, 8-9; Ball, 166. The implications from this statement will be discussed further in the "Biblical-Theological Implications" section.

[236] Neusner, 382.

[237] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I–XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 29, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 342.

[238] Morris, 391.

qualifier.[240] Thus, Jesus revealed the weakness and incompleteness of the Pharisees' judgment of Him and others.[241]

Then Jesus said, "I judge no one" (John 8:15). Jesus was not teaching that He does not judge (John 8:26). Instead, Jesus meant that He does not judge *as* the *Pharisees did*.[242] Thus, Jesus explained that His judgment was justified because the Father sent Him (John 8:16). Jesus said, "In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true" (John 8:17). Like the Pharisees, Jesus referred to Mosaic Law, which teaches about the necessity of two witnesses (Deut 17:6; 19:15).

However, Jesus' point was to highlight that they did not understand its interpretation.[243] Thus, Jesus said, "I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me" (John 8:18). Additionally, Jesus used ἐγὼ εἰμι to emphasize that He was His own witness. However, Jesus' use of "I am" is structurally different from the other ἐγὼ εἰμι sayings.[244] This is because the use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John 8:18 does not identify Jesus as a particular individual but His qualifications as a witness.[245] In comparison, Jesus said, "I am [ἐγὼ εἰμι] the

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[239] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 297.

[240] Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 407.

[241] Morris, 391.

[242] Carson, 339. He further comments, "he does not appeal to superficial, 'fleshly' criteria, and accordingly mark people up or down. If that is what his opponents mean by judging, Jesus does not do any of it."

[243] Klink, 408.

[244] Carson, 340.

[245] Ibid. Carson further comments, "he is peculiarly the *one who testifies*, with full qualifications for doing so, for the reasons specified in vv. 14, 16."

light of the world," thus claiming to be a particular individual (John 8:12). Therefore, Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John 8:18 was an appeal to His validity as a witness with God the Father that falls in line with the Mosaic Law (John 8:17).[246] However, since Jesus is God, His witness is already sufficient, but the Pharisees failed to understand who He is (John 1:1, 11, 8:13).

The Pharisees asked, "Where is your Father?" (John 8:19a). Their question implies that they wanted Jesus to bring them a physical witness.[247] Earlier in the Gospel, the Jews claimed to know where Jesus is from (John 7:27). However, Jesus told them that if they knew Him, they would know the Father (John 8:19b). D. A. Carson states it well when he says, "Jesus reveals the Father, so that truly to know Jesus is to know the Father, but also because special revelation from God is required to know who Jesus is."[248] This is similar to what is found earlier in the Gospel (John 1:18, 6:44-45). John commented that the Pharisees wanted to arrest Him, but they were unable to because His hour had not come (John 8:20). In the Gospel of John, Jesus' "hour" refers to His betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, eventual death, and glorification (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 27; 13:1; 17:1).

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is Greater than the Pillar of Fire and Darkness

After examining John 8:12-20, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. Jesus ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is greater than the

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[246] Klink, 408.

[247] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 484.

[248] Carson, 341.

pillar of fire and darkness (John 8:12a). Jesus' claim to be "the light of the world" took place during the Feast of Tabernacles when the Israelites celebrated God's faithfulness for His guidance and provision during the wilderness journey.[249] Light was a focal point during this festival, as the Israelites remembered how God guided them by a pillar of fire and cloud (Exod 13:21; Num 14:14).[250] This is why the celebration of lighting four lamps near the Court of Women was added to this festival (*m. Sukkah* 5:2-3).[251] Sherry Brown comments on this ceremony and states, "The temple became the beacon that looks back to God's guidance in the wilderness through the pillar of fire and forward to its expected return in the messianic age (Exod 13:21; Isa 4:5; Bar 5:8–9; *Song Rab*. 1.7)."[252]

Thus, Jesus' claim to be the light of the world points back to the pillar of fire (Exod 13:21-22; Num 14:14; John 8:12).[253] The pillar of fire manifested Yahweh's presence, not merely a sign.[254] In comparison, Jesus is greater than the pillar of fire because, in the person of Jesus, God became flesh to dwell amongst humanity and to reveal God in a greater way than before. (John 1:14, 18). Furthermore, while the pillar of fire guided the Israelites through the wilderness

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[249] See: George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 127; Carson, 337; Morris, 386-387.

[250] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 456. See: Morris, 388; Brown, 344; Burge, 255; Borchert; 295.

[251] Neusner, 288.

[252] Sherry Brown, "Jesus and violence during Tabernacles: Wit, mercy, and accountability in John 7-8," *Review & Expositor*, 120 (1-2), (2023): 62.

[253] Ibid.

[254] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 328.

(Exod 13:21-22), Jesus provides light that defeats spiritual darkness to those who believe in Him (John 8:12).

Throughout the Gospel of John, John used "darkness" to convey more than the absence of light but also to represent evil (John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35-36, 46).[255] John wrote, "The *light* shines in the *darkness*, and the darkness has not *overcome* it" (John 1:5, emphasis mine). The word used for "overcome" is καταλαμβάνω, which could convey "comprehend, understand," or it could mean "overcome."[256] In a similar context, John used καταλαμβάνω to communicate the idea of darkness "overtaking" a person who does not have the light (John 12:35).

Furthermore, John used the word περιπατέω, figuratively, to convey belonging to a new realm ruled by God instead of the world (John 8:12b; 11:9-10; 12:35-36).[257] Additionally, Jesus said those who follow Him "will have the light of life" (John 8:12c). Similarly, John wrote, "In him [Jesus] was *life*, and the *life* was the *light* of men" (John 1:4, emphasis mine). These two verses communicate that Jesus' light produces life (John 1:4; 8:12b).[258] Thus, Jesus is greater than darkness because as the "light of the world," He provides light that overcomes darkness and leads to eternal life (John 8:12; 12:35-36).

Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement also alludes to the concept of light throughout the Old Testament. Light can symbolize God's presence (Isa 42:6; 2 Sam 22:29; Job 29:3; Ps 139:11-12).

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[255] Carson, 119.

[256] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 381.

[257] Moisés Silva, "περιπατέω," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), vol. 3, 676.

[258] See: Carson, 338; Morris, 389.

Occasionally, light is equated to God's guidance. For example, the Psalmist calls God's word a *lamp* to his feet and a *light* to his path (Ps 119:105). Daniel Estes comments that the Psalmist "must choose to stay in the light of what God has said rather than setting out into the darkness on some other path of his own choosing. Without God's word he would be walking in the dark, unable to see the path before him."[259] Similarly, the author of Proverbs referred to God's word as a lamp and light (Prov 6:23).

King David wrote, "The LORD is my light and salvation" (Ps 27:1). David used the word "אוֹר," which is translated as "light," as a metaphor to convey that God dispels darkness because of who He is (Ps 23:4).[260] In comparison, Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1). He is also "the light of the world" who guides those who follow Him (John 8:12). Jesus came into this world as light to reveal God, deliver people from darkness, and provide eternal life to those who follow Him (John 1:18; John 8:12; 12:35-36, 46).

John 8:21-24

Context of John 8:21-24

Jesus' following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement occurs in John 8:21-24. John began by stating, "So he said to them *again*" (John 8:21, emphasis mine). John used the word πάλιν, translated as "again," to indicate that a new section began but is still related to the prior verses (John 8:12).[261] Thus, Jesus was still speaking to the Jews in the temple's treasury (John 8:20-22). Jesus said, "I am

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[259] Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, ed. E. Ray. Clendenen, vol. 13, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 425.

[260] Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 231.

[261] Carson, 341.

going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come" (John 8:21).

Jesus made a similar statement in John 7:33-34. However, in John 8:21, Jesus' declaration is more threatening because Jesus said they would *die* in their sin (John 7:33-34).[262] The Jews misunderstood what Jesus truly meant. Thus, they believed He was talking about killing Himself (John 8:22). Jesus pointed out that they misunderstood Him because they are of this world (John 8:23a). In contrast, Jesus says He is from above and not of this world (John 8:23b). This leads to Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that *I am* he you will die in your sins" (John 8:24, emphasis mine).[263]

John 8:21-24 Commentary

After examining the context of this pericope, this section will discuss the interpretation of this passage. This pericope is primarily focused on the further revelation of Jesus' identity. Jesus told Pharisees that He was going "away" (John 8:21). Jesus used the word ὑπάγω, which is translated as "away." In the Gospel of John, ὑπάγω is often used to refer to Jesus' departure to be with the Father, which is accomplished by His death (John 7:33; 13:33; 16:5).[264] Thus, Jesus' death was being compared to the Pharisees' death in John 8:21.[265] Jesus' death would reunite

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[262] Burge, 257.

[263] This is Jesus' fifth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This "I am" statement contains no metaphor, is grammatically absolute, and it is paired with a ὅτι clause to express future fulfillment. See: Chapter 1, 10; Ball, 169. The implication of this statement will be drawn out in the "Biblical-Theological Implications" section.

[264] Ardnt et al., 1028.

[265] Morris, 395.

Him to be with the Father, whereas the Pharisees' death results in them being dead in their sin (John 8:21).

The Jews' response to Jesus contains the word μήτι, which means "surely," and is used to mock Jesus, as μήτι is usually followed by a negative answer (John 8:22).[266] Thus, Jesus' responded, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world (John 8:23). Jesus was clearly separating Himself as different from the Jews with these contrasts (John 8:23).[267] Jesus repeated that they would die in their sin (John 8:24). He was speaking of the sin of unbelief (John 8:24), as unbelief demonstrates that one belongs to this world (John 8:23).[268]

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is the Great I AM of Isaiah

After examining John 8:21-24, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι points to Him being the Great I AM "אֲנִי הוּא" of Isaiah (Isa 43:10). In Isaiah 43, Yahweh called the Israelites to remember that He was their Creator and redeemed them (Isa 43:1). In the following verses, God announced to the Israelites that they did not need to fear the punishment and exile; as it did not negate their election or His loving care for them (Isa 43:2-9).[269] Yahweh declared to the Israelites, "You are my witnesses …

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[266] Klink, 409.

[267] Morris, 396.

[268] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition., The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 186.

[269] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 136.

and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that *I am* he" (Isa 43:10, emphasis mine). The "I am" in Isaiah 43:10 is a translation of the Hebrew phrase "אֲנִי הוּא." Throughout the Old Testament, this phrase is used by Yahweh to express His uniqueness and eternal sovereignty (Deut 32:29; Isa 43:10).[270]

Another instance of "אֲנִי הוּא" is found in Isaiah 41:4. Yahweh declares, "I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he" (Isa 41:4). Joseph Blenkinsopp comments that this verse "resists exact translation since, in addition to affirming Yahweh's active presence throughout time, it encapsulates the uniqueness and immutability."[271] Furthermore, the use of the Hebrew phrase "אֲנִי הוּא" can only adequately be translated as "I am he or I am the One."[272]

The use of "אֲנִי הוּא" by Yahweh is found in several places in the book of Isaiah (Isa 43:10-13, 25; 46:4; 48:12). Similarly to Grant Macaskill, Blenkinsnopp argues that the phrase "אֲנִי הוּא" is an affirmation of the deity and uniqueness of Yahweh.[273] When looking at the occurrences of "אֲנִי הוּא" in the LXX, it is consistently translated with "ἐγὼ εἰμι." Thus, the phrase "אֲנִי הוּא" is closely connected to the I am sayings in the Gospel of John.[274]

Jesus' claim that the Jews would die in their sins unless they believed that ἐγὼ εἰμι "I am" points to Isaiah 43. Yahweh declared, "*I, I am he* who *blots* out your *transgressions* for my own

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[270] Grant Macaskill, "Name Christology, Divine Aseity, and the I Am Sayings in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 12, no. 2 (2018): 226.

[271] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 19A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 197.

[272] Ibid. See: Macaskill, 226

[273] Blenkinsopp, 197.

[274] Macaskill, 224. See: 223-230 for a full discussion.

sake, and I will not remember *your sins*" (Isa 43:25, emphasis mine). This verse begins with the Hebrew phrase "אָנֹכִי אָנֹכִי הֽוּא," which is translated as "I, I am he" (Isa 43:25). John Oswalt comments "[Yahweh] opens with the statement of self-predication as found in 43:10 and elsewhere: *I am he.* Here it is made even more weighty with the long form of the independent pronoun *(ʾānōkî),* and that is twice repeated. It is in his character as the only, self-existent One that he speaks."[275]

These passages in Isaiah demonstrate that Yahweh is the only one who could provide forgiveness of sins. Similarly, Jesus called for the Jews to believe that He is "ἐγὼ εἰμι" (John 8:24). Jesus' "I am" statement is used as an absolute phrase, pointing to His claim to be the great I AM and the sole person to bring about forgiveness by faith in Him (Isa 43:10-11, 25; John 8:24).[276] Therefore, Jesus' "I am" statement in John 8:24 demonstrates that He identifies as the Great I AM of Isaiah. Jesus pleaded with the Pharisees to believe in Him; otherwise, they would perish like the Israelites who did not heed Yahweh's words in Isaiah 43.

John 8:25-30

Context of John 8:25-30

The verses in John 8:25-30 are related to the preceding passage (John 8:21-24). However, they are treated separately because Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in John 8:28 conveys a distinct connection to the proposed biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness. John began

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[275] Oswalt, 160.

[276] See: Beasley-Murray, 130; Macaskill, 226; Carson, 343.

with the Jews asking Jesus, “Who are you?” (John 8:25a). Their question was prompted by Jesus’ previous statement, “For unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

Jesus then said, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him” (John 8:25b-26). Jesus was communicating that it was not the right time or place for these judgments to take place.[277] This leads to Jesus’ ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, He said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* he” (John 8:28, emphasis mine).[278] Jesus then said, “And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29). This section ends with John commenting that many believed in Jesus based on what He was saying (John 8:30). John illustrates that although some Jewish leaders rejected Jesus' teachings, others accepted them. However, their belief appears unstable (John 8:44; 47; 59).

John 8:25-30 Commentary

After examining the context of John 8:25-30, this section will deal with the interpretation of this passage. The Jews asked Jesus, “Who are you?” (John 8:25). This was not a polite request, as the “you” in Greek is in an emphatic position (John 8:25).[279] Thus, they pressed Jesus

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[277] Morris, 400.

[278] This is Jesus’ sixth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. It contains no metaphor, is grammatically absolute, and it is paired with a ὅτι clause to express future fulfillment. See: Chapter 1, 10; Ball, 169. The implications of this statement will be further discussed in the “Biblical-Theological Implications” section.

[279] Mounce, 477.

to justify who He was.[280] The Pharisees knew there was a mystery about Jesus' last statement because it hinted at His identity being connected to Yahweh (John 8:24).[281]

Jesus said, "Just as I have been telling you from the *beginning*" (John 8:25b, emphasis mine). In the Gospel of John, ἀρχή is a crucial term. For example, John used ἀρχή to begin his Gospel; he wrote, "In the *beginning* was the Word" (John 1:1a). Furthermore, John used ἀρχή to emphasize that Jesus was with God in the *beginning* (John 1:2). John was explicitly referring to Genesis 1:1 to stress that Jesus is eternal.[282] John also used ἀρχή to describe the start of Jesus' miraculous signs (John 2:11).

In John 8:25, Jesus used ἀρχή to hint at both the beginning of His ministry and eternality as God (John 1:1-2; 2:11).[283] Edward Klink further comments, "Jesus was at the creation of the world what he had publicly claimed to be since the beginning of his ministry; it was who he was at that very moment, standing before the Jews."[284] John commented that the Jewish leaders did not understand Jesus was talking about the Father (John 8:27). Jesus wanted the Jews to know that He taught by the authority of the Father and always did what pleases Him (John 8:28-29).

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[280] Ibid.

[281] Carson, 344.

[282] Silva, "ἀρχή," vol. 1, 416.

[283] Klink, 411.

[284] Ibid.

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Receives Great Exaltation through His Death

After examining John 8:25-30, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. First, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He receives great exaltation through His death. Jesus said, "When you have *lifted* up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* he" (John 8:28a, emphasis mine). The word ὑψόω, which is translated as "lifted up," typically conveys the concept of exaltation.[285] In the Gospel of John, Jesus' heavenly exaltation is connected to His death on the cross.[286] Typically, ὑψόω was not used to refer to crucifixion.[287] However, in the Gospel of John, ὑψόω is used to refer to both Jesus being lifted up on the cross and the exaltation that He receives (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32).[288] Leon Morris states it excellently, "for his greatest glory consists in accepting the shame and the humiliation of the cross in order that thereby he might bring salvation to sinners."[289]

Jesus Has the Greatest Authority

Second, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He has the greatest authority as the Son of Man. Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the *Son of Man*, then you will know that I am" (John 8:28). When examining the four Gospels, one of Jesus' favorite designations of

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[285] Silva, "ὑψόω," vol. 4, 583.

[286] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1045.

[287] See: Morris, 401; Silva, "ὑψόω," vol. 4, 583.

[288] See: G. Lüdemann, "ὑψόω," edited by Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–), 410; Morris, 401; Silva, ὑψόω," vol. 4, 583; Carson, 345.

[289] Morris, 401.

Himself was “Son of Man.”[290] This phrase was an ambiguous expression that could be used to refer to a human being.[291] Similarly, in the Old Testament, “Son of Man” was a phrase used to communicate a designation of humanity.[292] For example, God referred to the prophet Ezekiel as “son of man” 93 times (Ezek 2:1, 3, 6; 3:1, 10; 4:1). Similarly, in Psalm 8:4, King David wrote, “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the *son of man* that you care for him” (Ps. 8:4, emphasis mine). However, when "Son of Man" depicts Jesus as exalted in the Gospels, those who believe it only refers to a human being run into issues (John 8:28).[293] Furthermore, that type of thinking also fails to explain how the phrase “son of man” became an articular phrase throughout the Gospels (Luke 19:10; 22:69; John 8:28).[294]

Instead, Jesus’ use of “Son of Man” in John 8:28 was pointing to the divine figure in Daniel 7:13-14.[295] In these verses, a “son of man” is said to have come with the clouds of heaven and approached the Ancient of Days (God) (Dan 7:13). Daniel wrote, “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom” (Dan 7:14a). Furthermore, this “son of man” would be served by all people, have everlasting dominion, and a kingdom that will not be destroyed (Dan 7:14b).

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[290] Carson, 164.

[291] Ibid.

[292] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 145.

[293] Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd Edition. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 471.

[294] Ibid.

[295] For an excellent discussion on the phrase “Son of Man,” see: Ladd, 143-157.

Similarly to Daniel 7:13-14, Jesus' use of "Son of Man" is within a redemptive and eschatological context (John 8:28).[296] Thus, Jesus intentionally used this phrase to connect Himself to this figure. Throughout John 8, the Jews were questioning Jesus' identity, authority, and legitimacy of His works (John 8:13-27). Therefore, as the Son of Man, Jesus rightfully has the authority, dominion, glory, and kingdom from God (Dan 7:13-14; John 8:25-30). Just as the Son of Man receives His authority from God in Daniel 7:13, Jesus too has been given authority by the Father (John 8:28-29). Jesus' authority is greater than the Jews, who believe they know who Jesus is and can determine His fate (John 7:25-30, 40-52, 8:13, 28, 37). However, their "authority" has no bearing on Jesus' "hour," which is determined by the Father and known by Jesus (John 7:30; 8:20).

Jesus Is Greater than the Bronze Serpent

Lastly, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in John 8:28 points to Jesus being greater than the bronze serpent because He is the true fulfillment of it (Num 21:4-9). Typology is used to make this connection.[297] Jesus' use of the "Son of Man" and "lifted up" is connected to John 3:14.[298] Jesus told Nicodemus, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant since he took Jesus' words in a literal manner (John 3:4). Jesus explained that He was talking about spiritual rebirth through the Spirit (John 3:5-8). Later in the passage, Jesus connected Himself to the bronze serpent (Num 21:4-9). Jesus said to Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the *Son of*

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[296] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 131.

[297] See: Chapter 1, 4.

[298] See: Carson, 201; Morris, 401; Beasley-Murray, 131; Klink, 412.

Man be *lifted up*, that whoever *believes in him* will have eternal life" (John 3:14-15, emphasis mine).

In Numbers 21, the Israelites were on their way to the Red Sea to go around Edom since the Edomites previously denied them passage (Num 20:20-21; 21:4a). Along the way, the Israelites became impatient, speaking out against God and Moses (Num 21:4-5a). They said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and water, and we loathe this worthless food" (Num 21:5b) Thus, the Israelites treated manna with contempt and rejected God's providence.[299]

Yahweh then sent serpents among the Israelites, and they bit them, causing some of them to die (Num 21:6). The Israelites recognized that they sinned, leading them to ask Moses to plead with God to take away the serpents (Num 21:7). Yahweh directed Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live" (Num 21:8). Moses followed God's instructions (Num 21:9).

Thus, when they were bitten, they could gaze upon the serpent on the pole, and by doing so, they would be cured (Num 21:9). Therefore, healing was available through an act of obedience by looking to the snake. Timothy Ashley elaborates, "In the two verses [Num 21:8-9] two different words for 'to see' are used, perhaps for literary variety, but also to stress that it was necessary to do more than simply 'see' or 'catch a glimpse of' the copper serpent; one actually

[299] Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 404.

had to ‘fix one’s gaze’ or ‘pay attention to’ this figure—a definite act of the will—if one wanted to be healed.”[300]

Similarly, those who *believe* in Jesus when He is *lifted up* would have eternal life (Num 21:8-9; John 3:15; 8:28). Jesus is greater than the bronze serpent because He is the greatest fulfillment of it. While the bronze serpent provided physical healing and deliverance (Num 21:9), Jesus provides spiritual healing and eternal life (John 3:14-15; 8:28). Unfortunately, the bronze serpent became an idol for the Israelites as they made offerings to it (2 Kgs 18:4). However, Jesus is greater than the bronze serpent because He is God; thus, He rightfully is the object of faith and devotion (John 1:1-3; 5:18; 8:24, 28; 14:1).

John 8:31-59

Context of John 8:31-59

This pericope closely follows the context of the prior verses (John 8:19-30). John pointed out that Jesus was addressing the Jews who believed in Him (John 8:30-31a). Jesus wanted to teach them what it meant to be His disciples (John 8:31b). Jesus said, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31b-32). The Jews responded by telling Jesus, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone” (John 8:33).

Their claim that they were never enslaved to anyone was not politically based since their history would say otherwise (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome). Instead, they referred to spiritual and inward freedom as the people of God.[301] Josephus records a similar attitude from

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[300] Ashley, 406.

[301] See: Klink, 415; Mounce, 480; Beasley-Murray, 133; Carson, 349; Borchert, 303; Brown, 355.

Eleazer, a Jewish priest facing a siege in AD 73.[302] According to Josephus, Eleazer stated, "Since we, long ago, my generous friends, resolved *never to be servants to the Romans*, nor to any *other than to God himself*, who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind" (*J.W.* 7.8.6).[303]

In contrast, Jesus taught that those who practice sin are enslaved by it (John 8:34). Jesus then said a slave does not have a permanent place in the house like a son does (i.e., John 8:35). Slaves could quickly be sold or traded, thus, having no security.[304] However, Jesus could set them free since He is the Son (John 8:36). Jesus acknowledged that they were offspring of Abraham, yet they wanted to kill Him because of His word (John 8:37). Jesus was implying that though they were physically descendants of Abraham, their actions showed that they were not spiritually Abraham's offspring (John 8:37-41a, 44).

Jesus said, "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word" (John 8:43). Jesus elaborated by teaching that their father was the devil (John 8:44a). Thus, they followed his will, which includes lying and murdering (John 8:44). Jesus' comment would have had them considering how the devil brought about death to humanity in the book of Genesis.[305] Similarly, in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, a Jewish Apocryphal writing, the author states, "Through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company

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[302] Josephus and Whiston, 765

[303] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

[304] Burge, 260.

[305] Beasley-Murray, 135.

experience it" (Wis 2:24).[306] The Jews were following the devil's ways by trying to plot to kill Jesus (John 8:40).

The atmosphere became tense as the Jews took offense at the statements made by Jesus. They said, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (John 8:48) Their comment was based on their belief that Samaritans were not exclusive children of Abraham according to God's word (Deut 7:3; Ezra 4:3; 7:2; Neh 2:20; 10:30).[307] Thus, calling Jesus a Samaritan would make Him an illegitimate child (John 8:41). Jesus went on to say, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death" (John 8:51). The Jews were upset with Jesus' teaching because he claimed that those who kept his word would not die, even though Abraham and the prophets had died (John 8:53).

Jesus said, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. It is the Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'" (John 8:54). Jesus revealed that they did not know the Father (John 8:55). Then Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). The Jews responded to Him by saying, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" (John 8:57). This led to Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, *I am*" (John 8:58, emphasis mine).[308] The pericope ends as the Jews picked up stones to kill Jesus, but He hid from them and left the temple (John 8:59).

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[306] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Wis 2:24.

[307] Brown, 358.

[308] This is the seventh ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. It contains no metaphor, is grammatically absolute, and stands alone. See: Chapter 1, 9-10; Ball, 168. The implications of this statement will be discussed further under the section of "Biblical Theological Implications."

John 8:31-59 Commentary

After examining the context of John 8:31-59, this section will discuss the interpretation of this passage. This passage begins with John's comment that Jesus spoke "to the Jews who had *believed* in him" (John 8:31a, emphasis mine). The word translated as "believe" is the word "πιστεύω," which can be used to refer to those who have genuine belief or who have unstable belief (John 2:23-25; 5:24; 8:31).[309] The context determines if πιστεύω is being used to communicate authentic or sporadic belief.[310]

Jesus taught that a true disciple must abide "μείνητε" in His word (John 8:31). The word μένω is often used in the Gospel of John to communicate that discipleship is a total commitment to live life by Jesus' word.[311] Living in this manner is the only way that one is truly free (John 8:32). The Jews believed they were spiritually free; however, Jesus revealed they were enslaved to sin (John 8:33-34). Jesus is the only one who can free them from sin since He is the Son (John 8:36). Jesus is not just an ordinary son; He is the Son of God who remains in the house forever and possesses the right to give spiritual freedom (John 8:36).[312] Even if they were in denial of their spiritual freedom (John 8:33), they would have been reminded of their need for forgiveness annually during the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).[313]

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[309] Carson, 346.

[310] Ibid.

[311] Mounce, 479.

[312] Morris, 407.

[313] Borchert, 304.

Jesus taught them that clinging to Abraham to be good with God was faulty because their actions proved they acted contrary to the true offspring of Abraham (John 8:37-47).[314] Similarly, John the Baptist told the Jews, "And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'" (Matt 3:9). The Jewish leaders were spiritually inept to see that Jesus came from God and was who He claimed to be (John 8:42-44).[315] In contrast, Jesus always acted in a way that reflected His belonging to God (John 5:19; 8:47).[316]

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (John 8:51). The word τηρέω, which is translated as 'keeps,' means "to persist in obedience, keep, observe, fulfill, pay attention to."[317] The Jews thought Jesus referred to physical death; however, He was referring to spiritual death (John 8:51-53).[318] Thus, the key to never tasting death is to believe in Jesus, resulting in keeping His word (John 5:24; 6:29, 58; 8:51).

Due to Jesus' claims, the Jews wanted Jesus to prove that He could justify these words (John 8:53). Jesus pointed to the Father who glorifies Him (John 8:54). Then Jesus said "*Your father* Abraham *rejoiced* that he would see my day" (John 8:56). The verb ἠγαλλιάσατο, translated as 'rejoiced,' means "to be exceedingly joyful, exult, be glad, overjoyed."[319] Jesus was

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[314] Carson, 351.

[315] Morris, 411.

[316] Carson, 351.

[317] Arndt et al., 1002.

[318] Borchert, 307. He further comments, "The use of 'see' and 'taste' are typical Semitic ways of expressing the great realities of life in sense terminology. The Jews' completely missed perceiving this new example of double-level thinking in John, which here employed the image of death. Death can be physical and/or eternal. But the one who is obedient to Jesus, even though that one may die physically, will live eternally."

[319] Arndt et al., 4.

teaching them that *their father* Abraham had the proper attitude towards Jesus. In comparison, they wanted to kill Jesus (John 8:40). Jesus took it further as He said Abraham "saw it and was *glad*" (John 8:56).[320] The Jews were baffled because Jesus was not even 50 years old but He claimed to see Abraham (John 8:57). According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was "about thirty years of age" when He began His ministry (Luke 3:23). The Jews comment about Jesus' age was not about His actual age. Instead, it was due to them believing Jesus was delusional because they *thought* His life span did not even come close to overlapping with Abraham's life.[321]

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is Greater than Abraham

After examining John 8:31-59, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. First, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is greater than Abraham for various reasons. Throughout this pericope, Abraham was repeatedly brought up by the Jews and Jesus. The primary discussion was centered on whether the Jews were children of Abraham or the devil (John 8:33-59). Jesus taught that they were not children of Abraham because their actions contradicted what Abraham did in his life (John 8:39-40; 56). Furthermore, Jesus told them that those who keep His word would never taste death (John 8:52). The Jews were thinking of physical death, not spiritual death; thus, they asked Jesus if He was *greater* than Abraham (John 8:53).[322]

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[320] This will be discussed more in the upcoming "Biblical Theological Implications" section.

[321] See: Morris, 418; Carson, 357; Klink, 425.

[322] Borchert, 307.

The answer to their question began to be answered as Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). The Jews were flabbergasted because they thought of Jesus as just a human being who was not even fifty years old (John 8:57).[323] Jesus responded, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, *I am* (John 8:58). Jesus began this statement with the phrase "ἀμὴν ἀμὴν," which is used by Jesus in the Gospel of John to make an emphatic and vital statement.[324]

Furthermore, the word γίνομαι, which is translated as "was," which in this context carries the meaning of "to come into being through the process of birth."[325] Additionally, γίνομαι is in the aorist tense, explicitly drawing attention to the fact that Abraham had a point of definite beginning.[326] Thus, γίνομαι is contrasted with Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John 8:58. Jesus claimed that He existed even before Abraham with the use of ἐγὼ εἰμι (John 8:58). Morris summarizes it well as he states, "A mode of being that has a definite beginning is contrasted with one that is eternal."[327] Therefore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is greater than Abraham because He came before Him (John 8:58).

Jesus' "I am" declaration also demonstrates that He is greater than Abraham because it points to His identification with Yahweh. Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι needs to be understood in an absolute sense.[328] Thus, ἐγὼ εἰμι stands on its own (John 8:24, 28; 18:5), indicating that He is

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[323] See: Morris, 418; Carson, 357; Klink, 425.

[324] See: Morris, 419; Carson, 358.

[325] Arndt et al., 197.

[326] Morris, 419.

[327] Ibid.

[328] Mounce, 487.

identifying Himself with Yahweh.[329] This becomes more explicit as the Jews are said to have "picked up stones to throw at him" (John 8:59a). The Jews believed that Jesus broke one of the ten commandments, which stated, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain" (Exod 20:7). Additionally, Yahweh declares through Moses, "Whoever *blasphemes* the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death" (Lev 24:16, emphasis mine). Thus, the Jewish leaders believed Jesus committed blasphemy; thus, stoning was the legal punishment (1 Kgs 21:10).[330]

Moreover, Jesus is greater than Abraham because those who keep His word will never taste death (John 8:51). God promised Abraham that through him all people would be blessed (Gen 12:3). The Jews were correct that Abraham and the prophets died (John 8:53). Thus, Abraham would never be capable of providing spiritual life. In contrast, Jesus can rightfully give eternal life because He is God (John 8:51, 58). Furthermore, Jesus said that Abraham saw his day (John 8:56). Edward Klink comments, "Jesus is the long-awaited redeemer of God promised long ago to Abraham."[331] Thus, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is greater than Abraham because as God, He existed before Him, He provides eternal life to those who believe, and is the one who fulfills God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; John 8:51, 56, 58).

Jesus Is the Greatest Substitution

Second, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that Jesus is the greatest substitution. This connection is made through typology.[332] Jesus told the Jews that Abraham *saw* His day (John

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[329] See: Klink, 425; Morris, 419; Brown, 360; Carson; 358.

[330] Carson, 358.

[331] Klink III, 425.

8:56). God called Abraham a prophet in Genesis 20:7, which states, "For he [Abraham] is a prophet." Furthermore, Rabbi Akiba argued that God allowed Abraham to see the coming ages based on Genesis 15:17-21 (*Gen. Rab.,* 44:22-28).[333] Similarly, in the book of *2 Esdras*, Abraham is said to have been given a revelation by God pertaining to the end times (2 Esd., 3:13-14).[334] It is possible that Jesus taught Abraham's rejoicing was connected to his laughter about having a son (Gen 17:17; John 8:56).[335] However, Jesus was referring to Abraham not having to sacrifice Isaac because God provided a substitution (Gen 22; Heb 11:19).[336] In Jewish tradition, the binding of Isaac took place during the Passover; thus, Isaac was compared to the Passover lamb, giving further weight to this connection (*Mek. R. Ish*. 7.78).[337]

God, desiring to test Abraham, called him to sacrifice Isaac on a mountain (Gen 22:1-2). Abraham obeyed and went where God told him (Gen 22:3-4). Abraham told his servants, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you" (Gen

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[332] See: Chapter 1.

[333] Carson, 356.

[334] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 2 Esd 3:12–14.

[335] Carson, 356. Carson points out that Philo interpreted Abraham's laughter as joy (*Mut.* 154-169). There was also a Jewish tradition based on Genesis 17:17 and 21:6, reflected in the Targum Onkelos and *Jubilees* 16:16-29 that Abraham rejoiced at Isaac's birth.

[336] See: Carson, 356; Mounce, 486. Michaels, 531.

[337] Jacob Zallel Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, New ed. (Philadelphia, Pa: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 40. See: L. A. Huizenga, "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 5. See: Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 326. To be clear, the Passover did not occur until years after Isaac's binding; however, Jewish tradition attributed the date of this event to near the same time the Passover would later occur.

22:5). Abraham's statement was not a diplomatic statement that concealed what would happen.[338] Instead, Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:17-19).[339]

Isaac mentioned to Abraham that they had everything that was needed for a sacrifice, except a lamb (Gen 22:7). Abraham told Isaac, "God will *provide* for himself the *lamb* for a burnt offering" (Gen 22:8, emphasis mine). When they arrived, Abraham built an altar for Yahweh and bound his son Isaac on the altar (Gen 22:9). Before Abraham was about to kill his son, God stopped him and provided a lamb that was caught in a bush nearby Abraham and Isaac (Gen 22:10-14). Nevertheless, Abraham had faith that they would return because God would provide the necessary lamb (Gen 22:5, 8, 14). The lamb that was caught in the thicket foreshadows Jesus, who is the ultimate Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). While Abraham *offered* up his *only son* Isaac to God, God *provided* His *only Son* as a sacrifice for the world (Gen 22:2; John 3:16). Therefore, Jesus is the greater fulfillment of the substitution that Abraham saw when he about to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:13).

Jesus Is the Greater Isaac

Lastly, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that Jesus is the greater Isaac (John 8:58). This connection is also made through typology.[340] It is vital to consider that God told Abraham that it was through Isaac and his offspring that an everlasting covenant would be made (Gen 17:19). Furthermore, after God stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, He reiterated that it was through his offspring that all nations would be blessed (Gen 22:18). Jesus is the greater Isaac

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[338] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 108.

[339] Ibid.

[340] See: Chapter 1.

because He *is* the *fulfillment* of the promise. Jesus is God's only Son, who came from Abraham and would bless the entire world (Gen 12:3; John 3:16; 8:56-58; Gal 3:16). Moreover, while Isaac carried up wood that he would be *offered* on as a sacrifice (Gen 22:6a) Jesus also carried wood up a hill (the cross), which He *was sacrificed* (John 19:17-30). Therefore, Jesus is the greater Isaac because He brings fulfillment to the promises made to Abraham and is the sacrifice that would die in place of sinners on the cross (John 1:29; 3:16).

Chapter 4

John 10:1-21

Context of John 10:1-21

Chapter 10 of the Gospel of John begins with Jesus teaching about sheep, robbers, thieves, and entrances (John 10:1-5). This chapter is a continuation of the narrative in John 9, in which Jesus performed a miracle, healing a man who was born blind (John 9:1-12). After the miracle, the religious leaders brought the man to the Pharisees to inquire how he was healed (John 9:13-15). After he explained what happened, some refused to believe that this work was of God because Jesus did it on a Sabbath (John 9:16). During this time there were rabbinical laws that categorized "work" which was prohibited to perform on the Sabbath (*m. Sabb.,* 7:2).[341] One of the types of forbidden work was kneading, which would fall under Jesus' making of mud to put on the man's eyes (*m. Sabb.,* 7.2b; John 9:6).[342]

The Pharisees then questioned the man's parents to find out if he was born blind and how he was healed (John 9:18-23). After questioning the parents, the Pharisees examined the man again to see if they could find out any new information of how he was healed (John 9:24-33). The man was eventually cast out of their presence (John 9:34b). Jesus found the man and asked him if he believed in the Son of Man (John 9:35). He asked who the Son of man was, and Jesus revealed that He is the Son of Man, causing the man to believe in Jesus (John 9:36-38). Jesus then said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those

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[341] Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 187.

[342] Ibid. See also: Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 441.

who see may become blind" (John 9:39). The Pharisees heard Jesus' declaration and asked if Jesus thought they were blind (John 9:40).

Jesus then said, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains (John 9:41). John wanted his audience to know that Jesus' teaching (John 10:1-21) was still directed at the Pharisees.[343] This is evident as John wrote, "This figure of speech Jesus used with *them*, but they did not understand what he was saying to *them*" (John 10:6, emphasis mine). However, other people were present to hear this discussion with the Pharisees, such as other religious leaders, the disciples, and those who lived around the area (i.e., Jerusalem).[344] Furthermore, this pericope (John 10:1-21) is connected as the healing of the blind man is mentioned once again (John 10:21).

John 10:1-5 has often been interpreted as a parable, while John 10:7-18 is the explanation for it.[345] J. Duncan Derrett constructed a narrative parable which he believed that John used as a source to write John 10:1-21.[346] Derrett further argued that John took the parable and changed it to include allusions to Scripture.[347] Derrett believed that the Apostle John did this to decode the

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[343] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 580–581.

[344] Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 436. Also, if John 9 and 10 were chronologically following the events recorded in John 8, there would have been many pilgrims in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

[345] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 380. See: P. R. Tragan, *La parabole du 'Pasteur' et ses explications: Jean*,10, 1–18 (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1980) for a more detailed explanation.

[346] J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Studia Theologica,* 27, 1973, 25–50. See: J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970).

[347] Ibid.

original narrative parable so it would have been more understandable for his audience.[348] However, Derrettt's proposal of John used as narrative parable should be rejected because it is highly speculative and has no evidence to support it.[349] John A. T. Robinson similarly believed that these verses should be understood as a parable by arguing there were two of them in John 10:1-5. He believed that the first parable was a challenge to the watchmen (John 10:1-3a), while the second parable pointed to Jesus' authority not being limited to signs (John 10:3b-5). [350] John A. T. Robison's proposal should also be rejected because John has no parables in his Gospel that are similar to those found in the Synoptic Gospels.[351] Furthermore, it lacks sufficient evidence to substantiate understanding John 10:1-5 in this manner.[352]

Since this is the case, classifying John 10:1-5 as a parable is faulty because it imposes features and concepts of parables from the Synoptic Gospels onto the Gospel of John.[353] To understand what Jesus taught in this pericope, it is helpful to recognize that He used concepts

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[348] Derrett, 25-50.

[349] See: Carson, 380.

[350] John A. T. Robinson, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissensclzaft,* 46, 1955, 233–240. Carson explains this further, "The first (vv. 1–3a) offers a challenge to the watchmen, the gate-keepers of Israel, to recognize who Jesus is and that he therefore has the right of entry. The second (vv. 3b–5) has as its point that Jesus' authority cannot be authenticated by signs; rather, it is self-authenticating and is demonstrated when his sheep hear his voice."

[351] See: Carson, 380; Morris, 445; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 167.

[352] Ibid.

[353] See: Carson, 380. He further comments, "This 'figure of speech' (*cf.* notes on v. 6) is distinctly Johannine. Just as John 15, far from offering a parable of a vine, simply provides observations on viticulture with various symbolic connections spelled out, so this chapter provides observations on sheep-farming, not as an end in itself but as a vehicle to get across the desired message in symbolic ways. But it is the message that controls the sheep-farming symbols, not vice versa."

familiar to the cultural practice of shepherding. Jesus did this to convey what constitutes bad and good shepherding (John 15).[354] Therefore, John 10:1-21 is best understood as an illustration or extended metaphor.[355]

Chapter ten opens with Jesus saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1). Sheepfolds in the first century were usually constructed from a cave with a rock fence around the opening or it was made up of rocks in a circular shape with an enclosure.[356] In both scenarios, there was a small opening through which the sheep could enter and exit.[357] Thus, the shepherd or a trusted individual was stationed there to act as the door, ensuring the sheep's safety by protecting them from outside threats.[358] The shepherd's role was to protect the sheep from predators or people wanting to attack or steal the sheep (John 10:1).[359]

Jesus explained that the gatekeeper would open the gate for the shepherd, and the sheep would recognize his voice (John 10:3). The identification of the gatekeeper refers to a hired

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[354] Carson, 380.

[355] See: Klink, 461. He further states, "In [John] 16:25, for example, Jesus declares that he has been speaking 'in illustrations' or 'figuratively' (ἐν παροιμίαις), that is, in veiled or symbolic speech, but he will shortly speak "plainly" (παρρησίᾳ). Thus, the Gospel itself makes clear that this term, and therefore vv. 1–5 as a whole, is being used in this pericope with intentional symbolism."

[356] Vernon H. Alexander, "The 'Good Shepherd' and Other Metaphors of Pastoralism," in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle, Lexham Geographic Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 380.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid.

[359] Craig S. Keener, "John," in *John*, vol. 2A of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament*. eds. Clinton E. Arnold; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 102.

under-shepherd.[360] The shepherd is the one who leads out the sheep, goes before them, and the sheep follow him (John 10:4). D. A. Carson comments, "Near-Eastern shepherds have been known to stand at different spots outside the enclosure and sound out their own peculiar calls, their own sheep responding and gathering around their shepherd."[361] Shepherds in the first century used their voices to lead their sheep, while Western shepherds rely on dogs to drive their sheep (John 10:3, 5).[362]

After the opening verses, John interjected Jesus' teaching and wrote, "This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them" (John 10:6). The phrase "figure of speech" is from the Greek word παροιμίαν. The word παροιμίαν is defined as "a brief communication containing truths designed for initiates."[363] Edward Klink comments on the use of παροιμίαν in the Gospel of John and says that it "bears a more complex meaning that can be described as a veiled or symbolic saying.[364] The other three occurrences of παροιμίαν in this Gospel reveal that Jesus knew that His teachings were hard to understand (John 16:25, 29); however, it is not due to intellectual incapability but spiritual insight, which only could come after Jesus returned to the Father.[365] Thus, the Pharisees could not understand Jesus' παροιμίαν because they rejected Him (John 9:16).

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[360] Carson, 382.

[361] Ibid.

[362] Ibid.

[363] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 780.

[364] Klink, 460.

[365] Moisés Silva, "παροιμία," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), vol. 3, 646.

John 10:1-21 Commentary

After analyzing the context of John 10:1-21, this section will explore the interpretation of the passage. Jesus' teaching continued to perplex the Pharisees because Jesus was using a figure of speech that would only make sense to those who believed in Jesus (John 10:6).[366] Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *I am* the door of the sheep" (John 10:7, emphasis mine).[367] This is the first of two ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in this pericope (John 10:7, 11). Jesus further explained that those who came before Him were robbers and thieves (John 10:8). Jesus then reiterated, "*I am* the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9, emphasis mine). Jesus explained that the thief came to steal, kill, and destroy. In contrast, He came that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

Then Jesus said, "*I am* the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14).[368] This is the second ἐγὼ εἰμι statement of this pericope. This "I am" declaration is closely related to the imagery in John 10:1-10 because it discusses what constitutes good shepherding.[369] Jesus said, "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11b). Jesus then contrasts His shepherding to those who are only hired to watch the sheep (John 10:12a). A hired hand flees when wolves attack the sheep, unwilling to jeopardize his life for sheep he does not own (John 10:12b-13).

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[366] Carson, 383.

[367] This is Jesus' eight ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This is the third "I am" statement containing a metaphor. These types of "I am" statements contain conceptual parallels from the Old Testament that give proper background to understand the metaphors in these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements. See: Chapter 1, 8-9; Ball, 166.

[368] This is Jesus' ninth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This is the fourth "I am" statement containing a metaphor. These types of "I am" statements contain conceptual parallels from the Old Testament that give proper background to understand the metaphors in these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements. See: Chapter 1, 8-9; Ball, 166.

[369] The implications of these ἐγὼ εἰμι statement will be drawn out in the "Biblical Theological Implications" section.

Jesus then said He knows His own; conversely, they know Him (John 10:14). In this verse, the word translated as "know" is γινώσκω. In this context, γινώσκω means "to know someone" in a personal matter (John 1:48; 2:24).[370] In a similar way, Jesus' use of γινώσκω conveys a close-knitted relationship between Him and the Father (John 10:15a). Jesus desires His followers to have a personal relationship with Him, just as He has with the Father. Jesus reiterated that He would lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:15b). Jesus said, "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them in also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16). The other sheep Jesus mentioned are those who are not Jewish, showing the universal scope of His mission (John 3:16).[371]

Jesus then said that the Father loves Him because "I lay down my life that I may take it up again" (John 10:17). Jesus is communicating that His death was the will of God.[372] Leon Morris further comments, "And because he is in perfect harmony with the will of God he goes forward to that death. Thus, the Father's love is the recognition from the Father's side of the perfect community between them in this matter."[373] Jesus then said He had authority to lay down His life and to take it up again because of the Father (John 10:18). After Jesus finished speaking, there was division amongst the Jews because of His words (John 10:19). Some of them claimed that Jesus had a demon and was insane (John 10:20). However, others reasoned that Jesus was could not be demonically possessed because He restored the blind man's sight (John 10:21).

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[370] Arndt et al., 200.

[371] See: Klink., 465; Morris, 455; Carson, 388.

[372] Morris, 455.

[373] Ibid., 456.

Biblical Theological Implications

Jesus Is the Only Door to God

After examining John 10:1-21, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications that pertain to Jesus' surpassing greatness. John wanted those who would encounter this ἐγὼ εἰμι statement to take it seriously, which is evident by his use of ἀμὴν ἀμὴν (John 10:7).[374] Jesus said, "I am the door" (John 10:7, 9). Jesus' use of "I am" in John 10:7 and 10:9 communicates that He only door to God, with multiple implications.

First, it is Jesus *alone* who provides entry for humanity to have access to God. Jesus' "I am" statements of "I am the door" (John 10:7, 9) are an expansion of the ideas found in John 10:1-5.[375] The primary function of a door is to provide an entryway or an exit. However, Jesus is not just any door, but specifically "the door of the sheep" (John 10:7, 9). This can be seen in verse nine, as Jesus mentions that those who enter through Him can "go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9b). Jesus provides entry and exit to provision for His sheep. Throughout history, sheep have been domesticated and pastoral animals.[376] Their diet consists primarily of grass, and they depend highly on a shepherd to protect and lead them to grass and water.[377]

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[374] See: Carson, 161-162. He comments, "The original Hebrew word for 'amen' comes from a root denoting certainty, steadfastness. It was sometimes appended to the end of prayers (*e.g.* Ps. 41:13) to voice hearty agreement and solemn wish that the prayer be fulfilled; Jesus uses it before an utterance to confirm and emphasize its trustworthiness and importance. In the Synoptics the expression always occurs singly; in John, always doubled. The term is so characteristic of Jesus that it appears in transliteration even for the Greek-speaking readers of the Gospels."

[375] Carson, 384. He further explains, "the framework is still quite different from vv. 1–5, where a watchman presides at the gate, sanctioning the entrance of the shepherd, and several flocks are assumed to be in the fold. Here, the watchman has disappeared, and the only flock in the enclosure belongs to the shepherd who serves as the gate."

[376] Stephen Bennett, "Sheep," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[377] Ibid.

Similarly, Jesus claims to provide for His sheep to go in and out freely (John 10:8). Thus, Jesus offers both protection and provision for them, not only physically but spiritually, too.

Second, as the door of the sheep, Jesus alone provides salvation for His people. Jesus said, "If anyone enters by me, he will be saved" (John 10:9b). The word translated as "saved," is the Greek word σῴζω. In the Gospel of John, σῴζω is primarily used in a soteriological sense (John 3:16).[378] The occurrence of σῴζω in John 10:9 is in its passive form, σωθήσεται, indicating that the person who enters by the door will be saved by Jesus, it is not of one's own doing.[379] Jesus ἐγὼ εἰμι statement here is a claim that He alone is the way to have access to God and to have abundant life. This is further exemplified in the Greek text, as the phrase "δι' ἐμοῦ," translated as "through me" is in an emphatic position (John 10:9, NA[28]).

Salvation is not achieved through human effort or privilege but only through faith in Jesus (John 1:13). Jesus emphasized these ideas as He said, "*I came* that they *may* have *life* and have it *abundantly*" (John 10:10, emphasis mine). Jesus offers abundant, eternal life to those who believe in Him. This life begins when a person places their faith in Jesus. No other person or thing can offer what Jesus provides, making Him the greatest and only way to get to God.

There are some parallels to Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am the door" (John 10:7, 9) found in the Old Testament. For example, the psalmist declared, "Open the *gates* of righteousness that I may enter through them" (Ps 118:19, emphasis mine). William VanGemeren comments that Psalm 118 "may have been used in a liturgical setting, when a Davidic king led

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[378] Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 434.

[379] Klink, 462.

the procession of pilgrims in a thanksgiving service."[380] The psalmist said that only the righteous were able to enter through these gates (Ps 118:20). This righteousness was achieved only by responding to God's love and loyalty in faith (Ps 118:1, 13-16, 29).[381]

A similar idea is found in Isaiah. He prophesied, "Open the *gates* that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in" (Isa 26:2, emphasis mine). John Oswalt comments that it is only those who believe in Yahweh's promise of salvation are considered righteous.[382] The remaining portion of Isaiah 26 emphasizes that the people are only allowed to enter the gates of righteousness because of what Yahweh has done on their behalf (Isa 26:2ff).[383] Similarly, Jesus is the door that allows people to be saved and find pasture (John 10:9). Finding pasture entails having the sheep fulfill their God-given role (carrying out God's will for their lives) (Eph 2:10) and having eternal life (John 10:10).[384]

Yahweh told Jeremiah to "stand in the *gate* of the LORD's house" to proclaim to the people of Judah "who enter these *gates* to worship the LORD." (Jer 7:2, emphasis mine). Yahweh desired for the people of Judah to reform their ways, as they were not truly living for Him (Jer 7:2ff). The people falsely trusted the temple complex as their security, believing that if

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[380] Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 851.

[381] Ibid.

[382] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 471.

[383] J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 195. Isaiah prophesied "O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for *you* have indeed *done for us all our works*" (i.e., Isa 26:12, emphasis mine).

[384] Morris, 452.

the temple stood, they were on good terms with God (Jer 7:4, 8).[385] However, Yahweh exposed their infidelity as He said they "steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods you have not known" (Jer 7:9). Furthermore, the people still tried to worship God at His temple, thereby making it a "den of robbers" (Jer 7:10-11). Yahweh sent many messengers to warn them about the consequences of their actions, but they refused to listen (Jer 7:22-27).

Similarly, Jesus warned His audience that those before him were only thieves and robbers (John 10:1, 8a). Furthermore, Jesus said that the thief only comes "to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10a). Jesus was teaching that the Pharisees, religious leaders, and all those who claimed to be the Messiah were not acting as *the door* of *God*, but as thieves and robbers. Jesus was not speaking against the great patriarchs (Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses) but against the religious establishment of His day, which went against God's will.[386]

The people who follow these thieves and robbers would jeopardize their salvation (e.g., John 10:8-10). A prime example of this is how the Pharisees handled the healing of the man who was born blind (John 9). They cast him out of their presence and the synagogue because he refused to degrade Jesus (John 9:24-34). Additionally, the Pharisees caused people to fear getting

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[385] Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 21A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 462.

[386] Robert H. Mounce, "John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 502. See: Beasley-Murray, 170. See: Morris, 450. See: Brown 393-394, Brown further notes, "in our opinion the Pharisees and Sadducees remain the most probable targets of Jesus' remarks. The unhappy line of priestly rulers and politicians from Maccabean times until Jesus' own day could certainly be characterized as false shepherds, thieves, and robbers who came before Jesus. And the Pharisees too bad soiled themselves in the political power struggle in the Hasmonean and Herodian periods. The strong language used in this explanation of the parable may well be compared with that of Matt 23, where Jesus attacks the unjust exercise of authority over the people by the scribes and Pharisees."

cast out of the synagogues (John 9:22). Furthermore, it was the Jewish leaders who were seeking a way to kill Jesus for "breaking the Sabbath" and claiming equality with God (John 5:18). However, Jesus is the door who provides safety from these thieves and robbers, leading people to have eternal, abundant life in Him (John 10:9-10).

Additionally, the world is filled with various ideas of how one can get to God or the gods. For example, the Greco-Roman view of religion included syncretism, public and private cults that developed from Greek and Roman practices, and "mystery" religions that developed from the Near East.[387] There were hundreds of gods, if not thousands. Thus, Jesus' claim to be *the door* would exclude all the false gods and messiahs that came before Him (John 10:8).[388] Thus, any other "door" that claims to know how to get to God or how to earn right standing with God or the gods is entirely and utterly false (John 10:7-10).

Jesus Is the Greatest Shepherd

Jesus' second ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in this pericope (John 10:11, 14) demonstrates that He is the greatest shepherd. The Israelites were familiar with the notion of being referred to as God's sheep (Ps 95:7-8; Isa 53:6). Additionally, Jesus' claim "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14) would have reminded the audience and reader to the declarations made by Yahweh through the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel, who wrote to the Israelite exiles in Babylon, pointed out to the Israelites that their greatest enemy was not Babylon but was found internally.[389]

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[387] David E. Aune, "Religion, Greco-Roman," *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 917.

[388] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 170.

[389] Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 277.

Yahweh spoke to Ezekiel to denounce the false shepherds in Israel because instead of feeding the sheep, they fed themselves (Ezek 34:1-3). The term "shepherd" was a commonly used word for a leader in the ancient Near East, dating back to Sumerian times as early as 2119 BC.[390] Yahweh declared that these false shepherds (those in leadership roles in Israel) had not strengthened the weak, taken care of the sick, or bound the injured (Ezek 34:4). The rulers of Israel failed to shepherd the people of God and that caused His people to be scattered with no one to seek them out (Ezek 34:5-6). They failed due to their selfish gain and not caring for the sheep (Ezek 34:2-6). Yahweh said that His sheep became prey and food and did not have a shepherd to protect them (Ezek 34:8).

Similarly, Jesus denounced the false shepherds before Him (John 10:8). He called them "hired hands," who run away upon seeing a wolf (John 10:12-13). Jesus said that they are thieves and robbers who only intend to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:1, 8, 10). In contrast, Jesus is the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14). He lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11b). He is the good shepherd who protects the sheep and brings them into the fold (John 10:9-16). Jesus goes beyond what an average first-century shepherd in Palestine would do by giving up His life purposefully (John 10:16-18).[391]

In Ezekiel 34, Yahweh rebukes the shepherds for their negligence and promises to rescue the sheep Himself (Ezek 34:9-10).[392] Furthermore, He said that He would search out the sheep,

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[390] Block, 279–280. Block notes, “The Sumerian King List describes the divinized Dumuzu as “a shepherd” (*sipa*) who reigned 36,000 years. See T. Jacobsen, *Sumerian King List,* 72–73; *ANET,* 265. Of Etana, a postdiluvian ruler of Kish, the same document records, “Etana, a shepherd, the one who ascended to heaven, who consolidated all countries, became king [*lugal*] and reigned 1,560 years.” See *Sumerian King List,* 80–81; *ANET,* 265.”

[391] Morris, 453.

rescue them, feed them, and be their shepherd (Ezek 34:11-16). Similarly, Jesus said, "*I am* [ἐγὼ εἰμι] the good shepherd" (John 10:9, 11). Jesus is the greatest shepherd because He is not just *a* shepherd; He is *the* good shepherd.[393] Jesus is the greatest Shepherd who *alone* can provide pasture and life abundantly to His sheep (John 10:8, 10; Eze 34:13-14). Furthermore, Jesus' willing sacrifice of Himself constitutes Him as the greatest shepherd (John 10:11; Heb 13:20).[394]

The Old Testament contains references to the need for a good shepherd. For instance, Moses prayed that Yahweh would appoint a man to shepherd His people so they would not be like "*sheep* that have no *shepherd*" (Num 27:16-17, emphasis mine). Similarly, the prophet Micaiah said Israel was like "sheep that have *no shepherd*" (1 Kgs 22:17, emphasis mine). Additionally, the prophet Zechariah said, "Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a *shepherd*" (Zech 10:2, emphasis mine). Jesus, the greatest shepherd, became fully man and provided the shepherding the people of God needed all along (John 1:14; 10:11). Jesus is the fulfillment of Moses' prayer and the prophets' call for a true shepherd for Israel (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Zech 10:2).[395]

In Psalm 23, King David said, "The LORD is my *shepherd* (Ps 23:1, emphasis mine). This is similar to Jacob's declaration that God was his shepherd (Gen 49:18). David also said that

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[392] There is a similar condemnation against false shepherds made in Jeremiah 23:2, which God said He would pay these shepherds back for their actions.

[393] Michaels, 585–586. He further comments, "In the translation, I capitalized 'Shepherd' in 'I am the good Shepherd,' but not in the next sentence, 'The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' The reason is that in the second instance the definite article appears to be generic (like "the doorkeeper" in v. 3, "the thief" in v. 10, or "the hireling" in v. 12). See: Morris, 453.

[394] See: Carson, 386.

[395] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 462.

Yahweh "makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters" (Ps 23:2). Likewise, Jesus claims that He allows His sheep to "go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9b). Furthermore, David said that Yahweh prepared a table for him among his enemies, his cup overflows, and goodness and mercy followed him for his life (Ps 23:5-6). Similarly, Jesus provides pasture and abundant life for His people (John 10:9-10). Jesus is also fully God (John 1:1). Thus, He rightfully carries out the role of the good shepherd, whom Jacob and David declared led them throughout their lives.

Jesus is the greatest shepherd because He fulfills the role declared in Ezekiel 34:23-24. Yahweh said, "And I will set up over them *one shepherd*" (Ezek, 34:23a, emphasis mine). Jesus alluded to this when He said He would gather all the sheep so there would be "*one* flock, *one shepherd*" (John 10:16b, emphasis mine). Block comments that Yahweh "envisions a single person, who may embody the dynasty but who occupies the throne himself."[396] Moreover, the original audience of Ezekiel would have expected this shepherd to unify Judah and Israel; however, Jesus extends this concept to include the Gentiles (John 10:16).[397]

Yahweh also said the shepherd would be "my servant *David*, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd (Ezek 34:23b, emphasis mine). This hope sprung from the Davidic covenant in which God declared that a descendant from David's line would sit on the throne and rule forever (2 Sam 7:16). The hope for one to come from the Davidic line is seen in other prophetic passages (Jer 23:5-6; 33:17). This descendant from David would act on behalf of

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[396] Block, 298.

[397] Andreas Köstenberger, "Jesus the Good Shepherd Who Will Also Bring Other Sheep (John 10:16): The Old Testament Background of a Familiar Metaphor," *Bulletin for Biblical Research, Vol. 12* (2002): 77.

Yahweh with divine prerogatives (Jer 23:5-6). Jesus, who is of the Davidic line, also claimed equality with the Father (John 7:42; 10:30). Thus, Jesus is the fulfillment of the great shepherd from the Davidic line.

Additionally, Jesus emphasized that He would lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:11b, 15b, 17b-18). In comparison to Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23, Yahweh did not claim that He would lay down His life for the sheep. Therefore, Jesus is taking the concepts found in Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23 further by revealing that the shepherd would lay down His life for His sheep. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself is what the Father desires (John 10:18b). King David was the only other "model" shepherd from Israel's history.[398] David told King Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth" (1 Sam 17:34-35).

In this passage, Jesus makes it clear that laying down His life would be how He would gather the sheep into one fold (John 10:15-16). A similar idea is found in John 11:51-52 when Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation to bring back "the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:52). Jesus is the greatest shepherd because unlike the other shepherds who do not care for the sheep, He was willing to give up His life for them. Thus, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement of "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:9, 11) demonstrates that He is the greatest shepherd.

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[398] Brown, 386.

John 11:1-44

Context of John 11:1-44

The events in John 11 occur between the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22) and the Passover (John 11:55).[399] Prior to John 11, the Pharisees wanted to stone Jesus because He claimed to be one with the Father (John 10:30-33). The Jews believed that this was a blasphemous claim that deserved death (Lev 24:16; 10:30, 33). They tried to arrest Jesus, but John recorded that Jesus was able to escape (John 10:39). John opened chapter 11 stating, "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha" (John 11:1). Bethany was located approximately two miles away from Jerusalem (John 11:18).

John mentioned that Mary anointed Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair (John 11:2). Surprisingly, the recording of Mary anointing Jesus' feet does not occur until John 12:1-8. Thus, the implication is that this event was well-known at the time of composition.[400] Upon hearing of Lazarus' illness, Jesus said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God" (John 11:4a). John interjected and wrote, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (John 11:5). John was continuing to emphasize the close relationship that Jesus had with this family (John 11:1-5). Since that is the case, one might have expected that Jesus would drop everything and rush to help Lazarus. However, John wrote, "So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he *stayed two days* longer in the place where he was" (John 11:6, emphasis mine).

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[399] Stephen S. Kim, "The Significance of Jesus' Raising Lazarus from the Dead in John 11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (2011): 55.

[400] Carson, 405.

After these two days, Jesus told His disciples they were headed to Judea (John 11:7). The disciples tried to dissuade Jesus because it was near where the Jews tried to arrest him (John 10:30-39). Jesus replied to their reservations, “Are there not twelve hours in a day?” (John 11:9a). In the ancient world, timekeeping was less precise; Jews and Romans divided the day and night by twelve hours for each.[401] Jesus’ explained that those who walk in the day do not stumble because they have light, while those who walk at night stumble because they have no light (John 11:9b-10). Jesus wanted to reassure His disciples that they could carry out their tasks despite threats from Jewish leaders.[402]

Jesus then said, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him” (John 11:11). The disciples assumed that Lazarus was physically sleeping and would recover (John 11:12-13). The word “sleep” was a common euphemism used to refer to death in Jewish writings, as well as in Greek and Roman mythology.[403] It is understandable why Jesus' disciples thought He meant Lazarus was physically sleeping because He said the illness would not end in death (John 11:4). However, Jesus told them, “Lazarus has died” (John 11:14). When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus was dead for four days (John 11:17). According to some rabbis, the soul would remain near the body for three days, after which there was no chance of resuscitation

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[401] Klink, 498.

[402] Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 314.

[403] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition., The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 242. Thompson provides an extensive list of examples: “the ot phrase ‘slept with his fathers’ throughout 1-2 Kings and 2 Chronicles; *Jub.* 23.1; *T. Mos*. 10.14. For death as ‘sleep’ (sometimes ‘eternal/everlasting sleep’), see Dan 12:2; Sir 30:17; 2 Macc 12:45; *4 Ezra* 7:31–32; *2 Bar.* 11.4; 21.24; 36.11; *T. Iss.* 7.9; *T. Zeb*. 10.6; Matt 9:24; 27:52; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52; kjv: Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor 15:6; 1 Thess 4:13; 5:10 (*katheudōmen*); 2 Pet 3:4; Ign., *Rom*. 4.2; *1 Clem.* 44.2.”

(*m. Yeb*., 16:3).[404] Therefore, Jesus waited four days before going to Lazarus, knowing that people would think Lazarus was beyond saving.[405]

John continued, "And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother" (John 11:19). Visiting and consoling those mourning a death is an essential duty of Jewish piety (Gen 37:34-35; 2 Sam 12:17; Sir 7:33-34).[406] However, there were professional mourners too, since it was a common practice in this culture (Jer 9:17; Luke 8:52; *m. Ketub.* 4:4).[407] Additionally, since the Jews who came to the sisters were from Jerusalem, it implies that they were a prominent family.[408] Craig Keener argues that since Lazarus was dead for a few days, the family would have been in an intense part of mourning, known as the *shiva*.[409] This is when the family would sit at home while others would come to sympathize with them and bring them food.[410]

Martha met Jesus and expressed her desire that Jesus had arrived earlier to prevent Lazarus' death (John 11:20-21). Jesus replied, "Your brother will rise again" (John 11:22). Martha then said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24).

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[404] Neusner, 376. See: Brown, 424; H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. 2, (Munich: Beck, 1922–55), 55; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 630.

[405] See: Brown, 424; Carson, 411; Beasley-Murray, 189.

[406] Keener, 114.

[407] Jan L. Verbruggen, "Trades and Occupations," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). See: Neusner, 386.

[408] Carson, 411. He further notes, "The same suggestion of prominence is supported by the expense of the perfume lavished on Jesus by Mary (12:1ff.)."

[409] Keener, 114.

[410] Ibid.

Throughout the Gospel of John, the resurrection of the dead on the last day had been discussed (John 5:28-29; 6:39-40, 44, 54). Martha's belief was common in Pharisaic Judaism (*J.W.* 2.163; *m. Sanh.,* 10.1).[411] The Sadducees held another central school of Jewish thought, which rejected the belief in resurrection and the afterlife (*J.W.* 2.164-165).[412]

John 11:1-44 Commentary

After analyzing the context of John 11:1-44, this section will discuss its interpretation. This pericope is focused on the death of Lazarus, culminating in the raising of Lazarus by Jesus. Jesus told the disciples that He was glad that He was not there to prevent Lazarus' death so that they would believe (John 11:15). J. Ramsey Michaels points out that the disciples were said to have believed in Jesus (John 2:11; 6:69); however, Jesus was addressing them as if He wanted them to believe in Him for the first time.[413] This is indicated because the phrase "ἵνα πιστεύσητε," translated as "so that you may believe," is in the aorist subjunctive.[414]

Other scholars, such as Morris, argue that while such an understanding is possible, it was about the disciples starting to believe in Jesus *more* because of what He would do.[415] Robert Mounce summarizes it well, "While faith begins with a first step of commitment to the Lord, in another sense it is a progressive relationship. Faith grows as experience continues to verify the

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[411] Josephus and Whiston, 608; Neusner, 604. See: Carson, 412.

[412] Josephus and Whiston, 608.

[413] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 622.

[414] Ibid.

[415] Morris, 482.

trustworthiness of the one whom we have placed our trust."[416] When Jesus called Lazarus from the dead, His disciples' faith was strengthened. This explains why Jesus was glad He was not there (John 11:15). Furthermore, Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Thomas' statement expressed his growing belief and was more significant of a statement than he knew (John 11:51).[417]

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Martha said to Him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (John 11:21-22). Martha's comment to Jesus is filled with emotion yet shows she trusts Him. Jesus responded to Martha, "Your brother will rise again" (John 11:23). Martha told Jesus that he would rise on the last day (John 11:24). Jesus responded, "*I am* the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26, emphasis mine).[418] Jesus was not asking if Martha believed in the resurrection but if she believed that faith in *Him* gave her true hope to attain it. Martha replied, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (John 11:27). Martha's statement is one of the most remarkable

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[416] Mounce, 514.

[417] Carson, 410. He further comments, "there is another sense in which Thomas, like others in this Gospel, spoke better than he knew: his words have become a clarion call to would-be disciples, after the resurrection, to take up their cross daily and follow Jesus."

[418] This is Jesus' tenth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This is the fifth "I am" statement containing a metaphor. These types of "I am" statements contain conceptual parallels from the Old Testament that give proper background to understand the metaphors in these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements. See: Chapter 1, 8-9; Ball, 166. The implications of this "I am" statement will be discussed more in the "Biblical Theological Implications" section.

Christological statements in the Gospel of John.[419] Thus, Martha demonstrates that she does have the faith Jesus desired (John 11:25-26).

When Mary met Jesus, she also wished that Jesus arrived earlier (John 11:21, 32). However, Mary fell at the feet of Jesus (John 11:32). This detail points out that Mary was not as emotionally restrained as Martha.[420] John recorded that when Jesus saw Mary and the Jews weeping, He was "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled" (John 11:33). The translation "deeply moved" is from the Greek verb "ἐμβριμάομαι" which is only found a few other times in the New Testament (Matt 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5).

The word ἐμβριμάομαι can mean "to insist on something sternly" or "as an expression of anger and displeasure."[421] However, ἐμβριμάομαι can also mean to "feel strongly about something" or "to be deeply moved" based on the context.[422] Robert Mounce suggests that ἐμβριμάομαι indicates that Jesus was angry, specifically towards death, as it is a distortion of God's original creation brought about by sin.[423] Jesus' anger is further validated by the use of ταράσσω, translated as "greatly troubled" (John 11:33). Ronald Trail comments that ταράσσω in this context means "'he troubled himself' and implies a deep kind of disturbance."[424] This would validate that the use of ἐμβριμάομαι indicates that Jesus was angry in this context.

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[419] Morris, 489.

[420] Carson, 415.

[421] Arndt et al., 322.

[422] Ibid.

[423] Mounce, 520.

[424] Ronald L. Trail, *An Exegetical Summary of John 10–21*, Exegetical Summaries (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2018), 84.

When Jesus arrived at the tomb, John recorded that Jesus wept (John 11:35). Two different Greek words are used for wept in this section (John 11:31, 33, 35). The word κλαίω is used for Mary and the Jews' weeping (John 11:31, 33). In comparison, the word δακρύω is used for Jesus' weeping. The former word, κλαίω, is defined as "a loud, demonstrative form of mourning, a wailing."[425] Whereas the word used for Jesus' weeping, δακρύω, is a quiet weeping.[426]

Thus, Mary and the Jews' weeping (κλαίω) was caused by the death of Lazarus. In contrast, Jesus wept (δακρύω) because of the destructive effects of sin on the world.[427] The Jews noticed that Jesus was weeping, leading them to realize that Jesus loved Lazarus (John 11:36). This prompted some to say, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" (John 11:37). The people doubted that Jesus was able to do anything for Lazarus at that moment because it had been four days since Lazarus died (John 11:39).[428] However, it was only moments later that Jesus called Lazarus back to life (John 11:44).

Biblical Theological Implications

Jesus Is Greater than Death

After examining this passage, this section will deal with the biblical-theological implications of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement (John 11:25-26). Jesus' resuscitation of Lazarus

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[425] Morris, 495.

[426] Ibid. He further comments, "δακρύω means "to shed tears." Though the verb is found here only in the New Testament the cognate noun δάκρυον occurs ten times. The aorist here should probably be taken to signify 'burst into tears.'"

[427] See: Borchert, 359; Beasley-Murray, 193.

[428] Borchert, 360.

demonstrates that He is greater than death. Jesus made it clear at the beginning of this pericope that Lazarus' sickness would not end in death (John 11:4). At first, Jesus' claim *appeared* to be false since Lazarus was already dead (John 11:14). However, Jesus knew that He would raise Lazarus and reveal the glory of God because He has power over death (John 11:4; 43-44).[429] Furthermore, Jesus said, "I am [ἐγὼ εἰμι] the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Leon Morris states, "Jesus does not say simply that he will give resurrection and life. So much are resurrection and life associated with him that he says that he *is* the resurrection and the life."[430]

Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25b-26). The word ἀποθάνῃ, translated as "he die," is in the aorist tense, showing that Jesus was talking about physical death.[431] However, Jesus is referring to more than just physical death because those who believe in Him "shall live" and "never die" (John 11:25-26). By making this claim, Jesus declared He has authority over life and death.[432] As previously mentioned, many Jewish people believed in the resurrection of the dead on the "last day" (John 11:24; Dan 12:1-2).[433] Since the common belief about the resurrection was that it took place at the end of history, it would have been shocking to hear that Jesus claim that He is the resurrection (John 11:25). Martha took Jesus' response that her brother would rise again as something that pertained to the end of the age (John 11:23-24). However,

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[429] Kim, 58.

[430] Morris, 488. Emphasis original.

[431] Brown, 424.

[432] Kim, 58.

[433] Morris, 488.

Jesus spoke in the present tense, indicated by His use of ἐγὼ εἰμι to communicate that He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). It is through believing in Jesus that one can share in the power of Jesus' authority over life and death.[434] Jesus is the only One who can provide the resurrection, making Him greater than death (John 5:24-28; 8:51; 11:25-26).

Additionally, Jesus provides eternal life to all who believe in Him. This is evident by Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection and *the life* (John 11:25, emphasis mine). The word ζωή, translated as "life," is used 36 times throughout the Gospel of John; each occurrence refers to eternal life.[435] Jesus offers life (ζωή) that begins when one believes in Him while providing an eschatological hope found in Him alone (John 11:25-26).[436] Carson comments, "Ordinary, mortal life ebbs away; the life that Jesus gives never ends. It is in that sense that whoever lives and believes in Jesus will never die."[437]

Moreover, Jesus is greater than death as death cannot overcome Jesus' word (John 11:43). Jesus called Lazarus back to life through the power of His word as He said, "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43). Stephen Kim comments, "Only the simple command of His word was needed to raise Lazarus, who had been dead for four days."[438] Lazarus' response to Jesus' call fulfills what Jesus taught earlier in the Gospel. Jesus said, "An hour is coming, and is now here, when the *dead* will *hear* the *voice* of the *Son of God*, and those who hear *will live*" (John 5:25, emphasis

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[434] Borchert, 356.

[435] See: Beasley-Murray, 191; Carson, 413.

[436] Klink, 504.

[437] Carson, 413.

[438] Kim, 59.

mine). Furthermore, Jesus' ability to raise Lazarus after four days exceeds the Rabbinical belief that a person could come back to life within three days of death.[439]

Additionally, Jesus is greater than death because He has similar prerogatives as Yahweh (John 5:17, 26; 11:25-26). The prophet Isaiah declared that Yahweh "will *swallow* up *death* forever" (Isa 25:8, emphasis mine). The word used for "swallowing" in the Isaiah 25:8 passage is "בִּלַּע." It carries the meaning "to swallow up, i.e., to make disappear utterly."[440] Similarly, Jesus swallows up death because He took upon the death that humanity deserved because of sin and gives life to those who have faith in Him (John 11:26; cf., Heb 2:14-15; 1 Cor 15:54-57). Jesus is the only one who has the authority to reverse the curse of sin and death.[441]

Another example is when Yahweh declared through Hosea, "*I* shall *ransom* them from the power of Sheol; *I* shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?" (Hos 13:14). Sheol was believed to be a place where the dead were sent if they did not have God's blessing or were awaiting divine judgment.[442] In Hosea 13 Yahweh pronounced judgment on Israel which will ultimately lead to their death.[443] However, amid this pronouncement, Yahweh said He would have mercy on Israel, and death would not thwart His

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[439] See: Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896, 630.

[440] J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 192.

[441] Kim, 60.

[442] Robin Routledge, *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 173.

[443] Gary V. Smith, *Hosea, Amos, Micah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 187.

plans for them (Hos 13:14).[444] Robin Routledge further comments, “In the light of Israel’s impending demise, redemption from death and Sheol should probably be understood as a reference to national resurrection.”[445]

Similarly, Jesus claimed to be the one to redeem people from death because He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). As the resurrection and the life, Jesus will ransom and redeem those who have faith in Him, and they will never perish (John 3:16; 10:27-28; 11:26). John emphasized that Jesus is life from the beginning of his Gospel (John 1:4). Jesus proved to be victorious over death by rising again from the dead and ascending to be with the Father (John 20:13-23). This event guarantees that those who believe in Jesus will receive eternal life right from the moment of faith and will no longer face condemnation.

Furthermore, when this Gospel was written, Christians faced persecution from the Roman Empire.[446] One example of historical persecution against Christians is described by Tacitus, a first-century historian who wrote about emperor Nero's attack on Christians. Tacitus recorded how Nero had Christians arrested, tortured, and killed (*Ann.* 15.44).[447] He wrote in explicit detail and said, “an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of

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[444] Smith, 187.

[445] Routledge, 173.

[446] See: Morris, 405.

[447] Tacitus, *The Annals and The Histories*, ed. Mortimer J. Adler, Second Edition., vol. 14, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago; Auckland; Geneva; London; Madrid; Manila; Paris; Rome; Seoul; Sydney; Tokyo; Toronto: Robert P. Gwinn; Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1990), 168.

beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired" (*Ann.* 15.44).[448]

Furthermore, the Jews were fearful that too many people believed in Jesus. They said, "If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe him, and the *Romans* will *come* and *take away* both our place and our nation" (John 11:48, emphasis mine). There is no doubt that many people feared Rome in the first century. However, believers did not have to have the same fears that the Jewish leaders expressed; instead, they could have confidence that through faith in Jesus, they would never die (spiritually) (John 11:26). This is because their faith is in Him who is the resurrection and life, the One with authority over life and death (John 5:21; 6:40, 44; 11:25-26; 12:25).

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[448] Tacitus, 168.

Chapter 5

John 13:1-19

Context of John 13:1-19

Chapter 13 of the Gospel of John begins a new section of this Gospel, as Jesus' public ministry ends (John 12:36b).[449] This pericope begins by mentioning that the Passover was about to take place (John 13:1). John intended for this passage to be understood in the context of a Passover setting.[450] John continued to set the context, "During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (John 13:2). The constant mentioning of the betrayal of Jesus suggests that the meal recorded in John 13:1-19 is the supper recorded in the Synoptics (Matt 26:21-22; Mark 14:18-19; Luke 22:21-23).[451] Both John and the Synoptics have Jesus announcing His betrayal at dinner, causing the disciples to be uneasy (John 13:22).[452]

John continued, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God" (John 13:3). John wanted to emphasize that Jesus' time with the disciples was limited from this point forward in His ministry.[453] During the meal, Jesus "Rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it

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[449] Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 567.

[450] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, vol. 25B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 76–77.

[451] Ibid., 77.

[452] Ibid. A full discussion of the similarities and differences is outside the scope of this dissertation.

[453] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 545.

around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet" (John 13:4-5a). In this culture, washing guests' feet upon their arrival at home was customary.[454] Surprisingly, Jesus took the posture of a servant amidst His disciples. Craig Keener explains, "Whereas masters and banqueters would sit or recline, servants might stand to serve them; Jesus 'rises' to wash their feet."[455] Thus, this would have been unexpected since washing the feet of others was seen as a task reserved for the lowest of servants.[456]

Thus, it explains why Peter was reluctant to let Jesus wash his feet (John 13:6-8). From a worldly and sociocultural perspective, it does not make sense for Peter to have his feet washed by Jesus.[457] Jesus told Peter, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand" (John 13:7). The disciples did not initially understand the significance of what Jesus did, but Jesus explained it later in more detail (John 13:12-17). After washing their feet, Jesus said, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you" (John 13:10).

John commented that Jesus said this because He knew He would be betrayed (John 13:11). Consequently, Jesus said, "I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me'" (John

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[454] Morris, 544.

[455] Craig S. Keener, "John," in *John*, vol. 2A of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament*. eds. Clinton E. Arnold; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 137.

[456] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 462.

[457] Grant R. Osborne, *John: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer et al., Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 317.

13:18). Jesus said that getting betrayed was a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9 (John 13:18b).[458] Then Jesus said, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that *I am* he" (John 13:19, emphasis mine).[459]

John 13:1-19 Commentary

After discussing the context of John 13:1-19, this section will discuss the interpretation of this passage. John said that Jesus "loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). The phrase εἰς τέλος, which is translated as "to the end," communicates the idea of entirely and perfectly.[460] However, τέλος can also mean "to the end of life."[461] John wanted to make it clear that Jesus completely loved His disciples. Thus, Jesus' love would be demonstrated through His death (John 15:13).

John shifted the focus to Jesus' impending betrayal as he said that the devil "had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (John 13:2). John was pointing out that Judas and the devil were working together against Jesus.[462] On one hand, it was the devil's will to kill Jesus, but on the other hand, it was the Father who gave Jesus the authority to lay His life down for His people (John 10:13; 13:2). Furthermore, John wanted his audience to

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[458] This will be covered in more detail in the upcoming "Biblical-Theological Implications" section.

[459] This is Jesus eleventh ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This "I am" statement contains no metaphor, is grammatically absolute, and it is paired with a ὅτι clause to express future fulfillment. See: Chapter 1, 10; Ball, 169. The implications of this statement will be discussed further under the section of "Biblical Theological Implications."

[460] Moisés Silva, "τέλος," ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 478.

[461] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (XIII-XXI): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 29A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 550.

[462] Carson, 462.

know Jesus was not surprised by being betrayed (John 13:1, 3a). This is evident with John's use of οἶδα throughout the pericope (John 13:1, 3, 11, 18). The word οἶδα "connotes not only having knowledge but also being able to understand that knowledge."[463] Furthermore, John used the perfect tense form, εἰδὼς, to demonstrate that Jesus had prior knowledge of being betrayed (John 13:1, 3).[464] Thus, Jesus told the disciples that He knew one of them would betray Him (John 6:70-71).

Jesus proceeded to wash the feet of the disciples (John 13:5-5). As Jesus was going to wash Peter's feet, he said to Jesus, "You shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8a). Peter's response contains a double negative "οὐ μὴ," which is the strongest negation that occurs in the Greek language.[465] John highlighted Peter's unequivocal refusal of Jesus' action.[466] Jesus responded, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me" (John 13:8b). Thus, it became apparent that what Jesus was doing was more significant than what Peter thought.[467]

The word translated as "share" is the word μέρος. This word was used among many Jews when discussing their inheritance, particularly in the promised land and in the Kingdom of God (Luke 15:12; Rev 20:6; 22:19).[468] Carson argues that Peter at least understood there was an

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[463] Jeremiah K. Garrett, "Knowledge," ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

[464] Klink, 577.

[465] Ibid., 579.

[466] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 664. They further comment that this double negative communicates the idea of "by no means, certainly not."

[467] Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 368.

[468] Beasley-Murray, 233–234.

inheritance for God's people when he responded to Jesus (John 13:9).[469] Jesus wanted Peter to know that to take part in the μέρος that Jesus provides was to accept the foot washing because it symbolized the necessity of being cleansed from sin.[470] This became more apparent as Jesus said, "Not every one of you is clean" (John 13:10b). A similar teaching is found later in this Gospel, as Jesus says to the disciples, "Already you are *clean* because of the word that I have spoken to you" (John 15:3, emphasis mine).[471]

After washing their feet, Jesus asked if they understood what He had done for them (John 13:12). Jesus pointed out to them that they call Him "Teacher and Lord" (John 13:13). Both of these terms express the type of reverence the disciples have for Him.[472] Jesus then used the phrase εἰ οὖν ἐγὼ, translated as "If I then," which was used throughout the Old Testament to argue from the greater to the lesser, known as *a minori ad maius* (John 13:14).[473] Thus, Jesus said, "*If I then*, your *Lord* and *Teacher*, have washed your feet, *you* also *ought* to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14, emphasis mine).

Furthermore, Jesus taught them that He gave them an example to follow (John 13:15). The word ὑπόδειγμα, translated as "example," can be defined as an "example, model, or pattern."[474] Other uses of ὑπόδειγμα in the New Testament suggest the word means both pattern

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[469] Carson, 463.

[470] Lincoln, 368.

[471] Morris, 549.

[472] See: Beasley-Murray, 235; Morris, 551.

[473] Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 435. See: Brown, 553. (cf., Jer 25:29; 49:12).

[474] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1037.

and example (Jas 5:10; 2 Pet 2:6).[475] Since foot washing was symbolic of cleansing and forgiveness, the disciples were to forgive one another (John 13:10, 15). Edward Klink summarizes it well, "the term should not be understood too narrowly but as a 'rule of life' … [it] must be understood within the cosmological framework of the Gospel."[476]

Moreover, Jesus was willing to do what the twelve disciples did not even think about: washing one another's feet. Jesus humbled Himself to set an example for His disciples, who lacked humility and needed correction. However, the most significant thing that Jesus was teaching them was that foot washing highlighted the necessity of forgiveness to belong to Jesus (John 13:8-10). Additionally, they needed to forgive one another as Jesus set the example for them (John 13:15). Jesus reiterated this idea as He said that a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:16). If the disciples followed Jesus' instructions, they would be blessed (John 13:17).

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is the Great I AM of Isaiah

After examining John 13:1-20, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. First, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement points to Jesus being the Great I AM of Isaiah. Jesus said, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that *I am he*" (John 13:19, emphasis mine). Jesus' "I am" statement has no expressed predicate and is used in an absolute sense, hinting that Jesus was alluding to the divine

[475] Carson, 467.

[476] Klink 585.

name of Yahweh.[477] This is similar to the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements found in John 8:24, 28.[478] Thus, Jesus' statement calls for the disciples to believe that He is "ἐγὼ εἰμι" (John 13:19).

In the book of Isaiah, there are several instances when Yahweh declared, "*I am* he," which is a translation from the Hebrew phrase "אֲנִי הוּא" (Isa 43:13). This was understood by many Jews to be connected to the name of God.[479] Furthermore, the phrase "אֲנִי הוּא" is consistently translated with ἐγὼ εἰμι in the LXX; thus, it points to the connection between the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John and the name of Yahweh.[480] Thus, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement emphasizes that He is connecting Himself to Yahweh. Jesus pointed out that the disciples called Him Teacher and Lord (John 13:13-14). While "teacher" or "rabbi" was a term of respect, the word κύριος, translated as "Lord," has hints of divinity (Isa 43:10-13; John 13:14-15; 20:28; Acts 2:36; Phil 2:9-11).[481]

Additionally, Yahweh declared that "you are … my servant whom I have *chosen,* that you may know and *believe* me and understand that *I am* he" (Isa 43:10, emphasis mine). The word "בָּחַר," which is translated as "chosen," is used in this context to emphasize God's commitment and care for them.[482] Yahweh wanted the Israelites to know they belonged to Him and had a

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[477] Mounce, 552.

[478] Grant Macaskill, "Name Christology, Divine Aseity, and the I Am Sayings in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 12, no. 2 (2018): 223.

[479] Macaskill, 223.

[480] Ibid., 224.

[481] See: Morris 551; Carson, 467; Borchert, 85.

[482] Emile Nicole, "בָּחַר," edited by Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 641.

purpose.[483] Similarly, Jesus told the disciples that He had *chosen* them and were selected for a particular purpose (John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19).

Furthermore, Yahweh said, "I *declared* and *saved* and *proclaimed* … also henceforth *I am he*; there is *none* who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back" (Isa 43:12-13). These verses highlight Yahweh's unique identity, as no one compared to Him, and He alone could save them (Isa 43:10-11).[484] Likewise, Jesus told the disciples cannot be His disciples unless they were washed by Him (John 13:8). The only way they could be clean was by having faith in Jesus (John 5:14; 8:24, 51; 13:19; 15:3). Furthermore, God said that He alone had declared the future events before they happened, He has brought them to fulfillment, and nothing can stop His work (Isa 43:12-13).[485] Similarly, Jesus predicted His betrayal so that when it happened, they would believe that "*I am*" (John 13:18-19). Therefore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in this pericope points to His identification with the "I AM" of Isaiah.

Jesus Is the Greater David

Second, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that Jesus is the greater David. This connection is made through typology.[486] Similarly, Andreas Köstenberger states that Jesus' "reference to a Davidic psalm at the outset of Jesus' passion signals the fulfillment of Davidic

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[483] John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003), 490.

[484] Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 490.

[485] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 148.

[486] See: Chapter 1.

typology in the ensuing narrative."[487] Thus, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement points to Him being the greater David in two manners. First, Jesus' betrayal was more significant than David's because it pointed to a greater reality fulfilled in Jesus (Ps 41:9). Second, Jesus is the fulfillment of the promised Son of David (2 Sam 7:12-16).

To properly understand Jesus' "I am" statement in John 13:19, one needs to consider Jesus' quotation of Psalm 41:9.[488] Psalm 41 begins and concludes with thanksgiving from David to God (Ps 41:1-3; 11-13). However, the middle of this Psalm contains elements similar to those found in the lament Psalms (Ps 6; 22; 38; 41:4-9).[489] In these verses, David lamented to God how his enemies reacted to his sickness (Ps 41:4-9).

Willem VanGemeren comments on the enemies of David, "Their words were filled with hatred and without sympathy for his trouble."[490] David's enemies even extended to a close friend. David wrote, "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread" (Ps 41:9). In Israelite culture, sharing a meal was a significant and intimate experience.[491] It was a time when enmity and hostility were expected to be set aside.[492] The betrayal was even more forceful

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[487] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 487.

[488] See: Borchert, 89; David M. Ball, *I Am in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, (Sheffield, England: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1996), 198.

[489] Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 372.

[490] Ibid., 375.

[491] Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 654.

[492] Ibid.

because David said it was "*my* bread" (Ps 41:9b, emphasis mine). Tremper Longman suggests this phrase indicates there was great intimacy between them.[493]

Jewish tradition suggests that in Psalm 41, David spoke of being betrayed by Ahithophel (*b. Sanh.* 106b).[494] Ahithophel was called "David's counselor" (2 Sam 15:12). Furthermore, the author states, "Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and Absalom" (2 Sam 16:23). Ahithophel conspired with Absalom against David; however, Ahithophel's counsel to attack David was rejected by Absalom (2 Sam 17:1-14).

Ahithophel's betrayal of David foreshadowed Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Similarly to David, Jesus' was betrayed by a close friend, Judas Iscariot (Ps 41:9; John 13:18). However, Judas' betrayal of Jesus is more significant than David's because it led to His death on the cross (John 19:30). In contrast, Ahithophel's betrayal did not lead to David's death. Furthermore, David was surprised by Ahithophel's betrayal (Ps 41:9; 2 Sam 15:31; 17:21), further indicated by his lament to Yahweh in Psalm 41:9. In comparison, Jesus was not surprised by Judas' betrayal as He predicted it would happen (John 13:1, 3, 18). Jesus claimed that the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 41:9 was through the betrayal He would experience through Judas (John 13:18). Jesus' quotation of Psalm 41:9 in John 13:18 displays His awareness that He was standing in the messianic line of David and fulfilling the pattern of a righteous sufferer.[495]

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[493] Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 191.

[494] Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 16 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 572. (cf., 2 Sam 15-17).

[495] Köstenberger, 487.

By the time of Jesus' ministry, the hope of the coming Messiah was connected to David's Son from passages such as 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and Psalm 2.[496] The expectancy of David's Son in connection to the Messiah is found throughout the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 1:1; Matt 15:22; Mark 10:46-52; 12:35; Luke 3:31; 18:35-43). Additionally, in the *Psalms of Solomon,* a Jewish writing from the middle of the first century BC,[497] the author stated, "You, Lord, selected David as king over Israel, and you swore to him concerning his offspring forever, that his royal place would not cease before you."[498] Furthermore, the author wrote, "See, O Lord, and raise up their king for them, *a son of David*, for the proper time that you see, God, to rule over Israel your servant" (Pss. Sol. 17:23, emphasis mine).[499]

Jesus was attributing the fulfillment of this passage based upon the fact that David was connected to the coming Messiah (Ps 2; 18:50; 89:20; 2 Sam 7:12-16; Matt 1:1; Matt 15:22; Mark 10:46-52; 12:35; Luke 3:31; 18:35-43; John 7:42).[500] Jesus knew that His choosing of Judas was rooted in the fulfillment of Scripture (John 6:70; 13:18).[501] Carson further comments, "This did not mean that *everything* that happened to David had to find its echo in Jesus. It meant that many of the broad themes of his life were understood that way—especially where language

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[496] See: Carson, 470; Köstenberger, 487; Burge, 371.

[497] Y. Miura, "Son of David," ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 882.

[498] Rick Brannan et al., eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Pss. Sol. 17:5.

[499] Ibid., Pss. Sol. 17:23.

[500] See: Carson, 470; Burge, 372; Köstenberger, 487; Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition., The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 291.

[501] Carson, 470.

was so hyperbolic when applied to David alone that many readers of Scripture, Jews and Christians alike, were driven to seeing in such texts an anticipation, an adumbration, of the coming King."[502] Thus, Jesus is the greater David because He is the Son of David, the Messiah, and the one whom David referred to as Lord (Ps 110:1; John 1:41, 45; 4:25-26; 7:42; 13:18-19).

Jesus Is the Greatest and Final Sacrifice

Lastly, this passage demonstrates that Jesus is the greatest and final sacrifice as the Lamb of God (John 13:1-19). John intentionally noted that this narrative took place near the Passover feast to ensure that this passage would be understood against this background (John 13:1).[503] Preparation for the observance of Passover required each family to choose a lamb without blemish (Exod 12:3-6). Each household would guard the lambs to confirm they were suitable for sacrifice during the Passover.[504] The lambs would be sacrificed on behalf of each of the households so that Yahweh would "pass over" them and be spared (Exod 12:1-13).

The Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). Prior to John 13, John was building up to the Passover (John 11:55; 12:1). Jesus knew He would be betrayed and eventually die on the cross (John 13:1, 3, 18-19). Furthermore, the meal described in John 13:1-20 fits all the necessary characteristics of a Passover meal.[505] Raymond Brown

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[502] Carson, 470. Emphasis original.

[503] See: Borchert, 76-77; Carson, 460; Köstenberger, 485.

[504] Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 449.

[505] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (XIII-XXI): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 29A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 556. A full discussion can be found on 555-556.

further comments, “Both the Synoptic and the Johannine traditions were interested in the theological possibilities stemming from the Passover context in which Jesus died.”[506]

Jesus is greater than all the lambs that were ever sacrificed in the history of the world because He is the Lamb of God, the greatest and final sacrifice (John 1:29, 36). In contrast, the lambs used during the Passover could not take away sin. The sacrificial lambs only reminded the people that their sins were only passed over because of the lambs’ blood.[507] Thus, a lamb could not truly bring them the forgiveness they needed from God. This was confirmed later by the author of the book of Hebrews, who stated, “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb 10:4).

Jesus emphasized that only those whom He washes are clean (John 13:10). Those whom Jesus does not cleanse have no share with Him (John 13:8). Carson comments, “unless the Lamb of God has taken away a person’s sin, has washed that person, he or she can have no part with him.”[508] Jesus affirmed that the washing He provides is once and for all as He said, “The one who has bathed *does not need to wash*, except for his feet, but is *completely clean*” (John 13:10; 19:30, emphasis mine). The only way anyone could be cleansed was to believe that Jesus is the ἐγὼ εἰμι (John 13:19). Therefore, Jesus is the Lamb of God, the greatest and final sacrifice who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36).

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[506] Brown, 555-556.

[507] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 276.

[508] Carson, 464.

John 14:1-14

Context of John 14:1-14

Prior to Chapter 14, Judas departed from Jesus and the other disciples (John 13:27-30). Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him" (John 13:31). There was a sense of urgency and significance in what Jesus was teaching the disciples before Judas completed the betrayal.[509] Thus, Jesus said, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come'" (John 13:33). Later, Peter asked Jesus where He was going; He responded, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward" (John 13:36). This refers to Peter later joining Jesus in glory after His resurrection (John 21:19).[510] Peter replied, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you (John 13:37). Jesus responded by telling Peter that he would deny Him three times (John 13:38).

This conversation helps to establish the context of John 14:1-14 and explains why Jesus sought to calm the disciples' anxiety, along with the urgency of His message. Thus, Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Jesus taught the disciples that the Father's house had many rooms, and He was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:2). In some early Jewish writings, there are mentions of heavenly dwellings for the righteous (T. Ab. 20:14).[511] One instance comes from the book of *1 Enoch*, an apocalyptic

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[509] Morris, 560.

[510] Carson., 486.

[511] James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 895.

writing that was composed around the first century BC.[512] The author wrote, "And there I saw another vision, the *dwelling places* of the holy" (1 En. 39:3).[513] The disciples would have known that Jesus spoke of dwelling with God (John 14:2).[514]

Jesus then told the disciples, "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3).[515] Jesus was referring to His second coming.[516] Jesus then said, "And you know the way to where I am going" (John 14:4). This leads to Thomas saying, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way" (John 14:5). This leads to Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "*I am* the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, emphasis mine).[517]

Jesus then said, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:7). Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father (John 14:8). Moses made a similar request to Yahweh (Exod 33:18).[518] However, Jesus told Philip that if they have seen Him, then they have seen the Father (John 14:9). Jesus furthers

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[512] Jonathan Alan Hiehle and Kelly A. Whitcomb, "Enoch, First Book of," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[513] Charlesworth, 31. See: Keener, 145; Hiehle and Whitcomb, 1 Enoch 41:2; 45:1.

[514] See: Burge, 391; Keener, 145; Beasley-Murray, 249; Carson, 489.

[515] The use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John 14:3 does not fit the criteria of this study. See: Chapter 1.

[516] Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, Second edition., vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 344. He further comments, "Jesus' going in this context is his return to the Father's presence in heaven (via his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension), and it is to heaven that he will take his disciples when he returns for them"

[517] This is Jesus' twelfth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This is the sixth "I am" statement containing a metaphor. These types of "I am" statements contain conceptual parallels from the Old Testament that give proper background to understand the metaphors in these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements. See: Chapter 1, 8-9; Ball, 166. The implications of this "I am" statement will be discussed more in the "Biblical Theological Implications" section.

[518] Mounce, 561–562.

this claim as He tells them that the words and works that He does show that the Father is in Him (John 14:10-11).

John 14:1-14 Commentary

After examining the context of John 14:1-14, this section will deal with the interpretation of this passage. Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be *troubled*" (John 14:1a, emphasis mine). Jesus used the word ταράσσω, which is translated as "troubled." In this context ταράσσω means "to cause inward turmoil, stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw into confusion."[519] Similarly, Jesus used ταράσσω to explain how He felt knowing that He was going to die on the cross (John 12:27). Thus, the disciples were under immense anxiety, which makes sense given that Jesus taught them that He was leaving them soon.

Jesus continued, "Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1b). The Greek word πιστεύετε, which is translated as "believe" is found twice in John 14:1. It can be either understood as imperative or indicative. If πιστεύετε is taken as an indicative, it would be interpreted as "you believe in God, you also believe in me." If πιστεύετε is understood as an imperative, it would be translated as, "believe in God, believe also in me."[520] The word πιστεύετε should be understood as an imperative because Jesus would reveal that He is their only avenue to

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[519] Arndt et al., 990.

[520] Morris, 566. Morris' full comment is helpful as he states, "The meaning of the second part of the verse is uncertain because of the ambiguity of the Greek twice rendered 'trust,' a verb that may be either imperative or indicative in each case. This means that the expression may be translated in any one of a bewildering variety of ways. It might mean, 'You believe in God, you also believe in me,' or 'Believe in God, believe also in me.' Or we could translate, 'You believe in God, believe also in me,' or even 'Believe in God, you also believe in me' (though the 'also' makes this rendering rather difficult). It is also possible to take some of these as interrogatives: for example, 'Do you believe in God? Believe also in me.' Or 'You believe in God. Do you also believe in me?' Or we could put a comma after the first word: "Believe, believe in God and also in me" (cf. Moffatt, 'You believe—believe in God, believe also in me')." See also: Klink 613.

get to God; thus, they need to have faith in Jesus (John 14:6). This becomes more explicit in the upcoming verses (John 14:2-14).

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:2). The word used for "house" is οἰκία, which occurs a total of five times in the Gospel of John. In this context, Jesus' use of οἰκία refers to heaven.[521] The Greek word μοναὶ, translated as "rooms," appears only twice in the New Testament, both occurrences being in John 14. Due to the limited usage of μοναὶ in the New Testament, its meaning has been debated. Carson suggests, "The Greek word *monē*, cognate with the verb *menō* ('to remain', 'to stay', 'to dwell'), properly signifies a 'dwelling place.'"[522] Jesus spoke about having a place to dwell with God; however, He was not interested in providing exact details.[523]

Consequently, Jesus said, "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3b). When Jesus said that He was going to prepare a place for the disciples, He was speaking of something that already exists (heaven).[524] Carson further comments, "It is not that he arrives on the scene and then begins to prepare the place; rather, in the context of Johannine theology, it is the going itself, via the cross and resurrection, that prepares the place for Jesus' disciples."[525]

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[521] See: Morris, 567; Beasley-Murray, 249.

[522] Carson, 488–489.

[523] See: Morris, 567; Borchert, 103.

[524] Carson, 489.

[525] Ibid.

Jesus then said, “And you know the way to where I am going” (John 14:4). In the Greek text, ὅπου, translated as “where,” is in an emphatic position and ὁδόν, translated as “way” is last the word. Thus, Jesus claimed that the disciples knew what He was talking about.[526] Consequently, Thomas answered Jesus, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Thomas takes Jesus’ words literally; the disciples wanted to know how to get to the Father’s house.[527] Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6a). The disciples learned that the way to God was through Jesus (John 14:6).[528]

Jesus taught that knowing Him means knowing the Father and seeing Him (John 14:7). This reiterates that knowing Jesus directly affects one’s knowledge of God.[529] Philip replied, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (John 14:8). Jesus responded, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?” (John 14:9a). Jesus indicated the disciples did not understand Jesus’ full significance and mission.[530] Thus, Jesus said, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” (John 14:10).[531]

Jesus taught that those who believe in Him would do “greater works” than He did (John 14:12). The “greater works” are a direct result of Jesus going to the Father; thus it was a future promise.[532] It is incorrect to assume the “greater works” is about the Church doing more than

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[526] Morris, 569.

[527] Carson., 490.

[528] This “I am” statement will be discussed further in the “Biblical Theological Implications.”

[529] Borchert, 111.

[530] Morris, 570.

[531] This verse does not contain an “I am” statement. See: Chapter 1.

[532] Morris, 573.

Jesus did during His ministry.[533] Likewise, it is erroneous to say that the *quality* of the works is better than what Jesus accomplished.[534] Instead, the best way to understand "greater works" is found earlier in the Gospel of John. Jesus said, "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And *greater works* than these will he show him, so that you may marvel" (John 5:20, emphasis mine). The context in which this statement is made demonstrates that "greater works" pertain to resurrection and judgment (John 5:21-26).[535] Therefore, the "greater works" are accomplished under the New Covenant, brought about by Jesus' death and resurrection.[536] It is under the New Covenant that believers receive the promised blessings and power of the Kingdom of God to further the message of the gospel.[537] Furthermore, Jesus taught that these works depended on prayer in Jesus' name (John 14:13-14).[538]

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[533] Carson, 495.

[534] Ibid.

[535] Ibid., 496.

[536] See: Carson, 496; Beasley-Murray, 254.

[537] Beasley-Murray, 254-255.

[538] See: Klink, 622; Morris, 574; Brown, 636; Carson, 496, Borchert, 118.

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is the Great I AM Who Is the Way

After examining John 14:1-14, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. Jesus said, "I am [ἐγὼ εἰμι] the *way*" (John 14:6a, emphasis mine). The disciples were anxious because Jesus told them He was leaving and they could not follow Him (John 13: 33; 14:1). Jesus told the disciples, "And you know the way to where I am going" (John 14:4). However, Thomas said that they did not know what Jesus was talking about since they believed He was referring to a physical path.[539] The phrase "the way" is used three times in three verses, thus highlighting its importance (John 14:4-6). The word that is translated as "way" is the Greek word ὁδός. If it is understood literally, ὁδός can mean "road" or "path."[540] Figuratively, ὁδός can mean describe a "way of life or course of action."[541]

Similarly, throughout the Old Testament, the phrase "the way" is often expressed through the Hebrew word "דָּרַךְ." Although דָּרַךְ can be used for a literal road or path, it is commonly used figuratively to speak of a course of life.[542] According to Eugene H. Merrill, "Fundamental to the metaphorical meaning of דֶּרֶךְ is its covenant overtone. One's path in life, i.e., spiritual journey, finds its source and orientation in reference to one's relationship with Yahweh, the God of the covenant."[543]

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[539] Borchert, 107.

[540] Andrew W. Litke, "Journey," ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

[541] Ibid.

[542] Eugene H. Merrill, "דָּרַךְ," edited by Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 989.

For instance, in the book of Exodus, Jethro instructed Moses to "make them know the way [דֶּרֶךְ] in which they must walk and what they must do" (Exod 18:20).[544] Furthermore, דֶּרֶךְ developed into the concept of 'the way of Yahweh' (Exod 32:8; 33:13; Deut 5:33; 10:12; 11:22; 32:4).[545] This concept meant living according to Yahweh's instructions, words, and acts.[546] The book of Deuteronomy has several references in which the Israelites were called to walk in Yahweh's ways (Deut 8:6; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16).

Additionally, the Essenes of Qumran, an ascetic Jewish community from the second century BC to the end of the first century AD, wrote about a "teacher of righteousness."[547] They believed this "teacher of righteousness" provided the correct interpretation of Mosaic Law.[548] In the *Rule of the Community,* the author wrote, "*He* shall conceal the teaching of the law from men of injustice, but shall impart *true knowledge* and righteous judgment to those who have chosen the *way*" (1QS ix:17-18, emphasis mine).[549] The Essenes believed that their "way" of life was preparing the way for God (1QS viii:13-16; Isa 40:3-5).[550]

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[543] Merrill, 989.

[544] Ibid.

[545] Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 622.

[546] Ibid.

[547] Todd S. Beall, "Essenes," *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 342.

[548] Borchert, 109.

[549] Alex P. Jassen, "Rule of the Community," in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture: Translation*, ed. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 2959.

[550] Ibid., 2955.

However, all humanity are sinners and fall short of God's glory (Ps 14:3; 143:2; Rom 3:23). Since Adam and Eve sinned against God, humanity has been separated from Him because of sin (Gen 3). This separation between man and God is highlighted throughout the Old Testament. For example, after the Israelites were saved from Egypt, God commanded Moses to have the Israelites consecrated for three days before His presence came to dwell on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:13-20). God told Moses, "Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest he break out against them" (Exod 19:24). Additionally, in the temple of God, there were different levels of holiness, with each successive area increasing in holiness and restrictedness until it reached the Holy of Holies.[551] It was only the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:34). This was not done without strictly following the requirements for the atonement of sin (Lev 16).

In Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, He used ὁδός figuratively to show "the way" is a person, namely, Himself.[552] Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6b). Jesus was explicit that there are no other options to get to the Father. Getting to God could not be achieved by works or following a physical path (John 6:28; 14:5). Humanity needs cleansing from sin, which only Jesus can provide (John 3:18-19; 13:8, 10). Jesus knew *the way* could only be provided through His death on the cross and resurrection (John 3:14-15; 14:1-3).[553] Thus,

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[551] John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 140.

[552] Carson, 491.

[553] Carson, 489.

belief in Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, removes the obstacle of sin (John 1:29; 19:28, 30).[554] This belief causes one to be born again (John 3:3) and *then* be able to walk in obedience to what Jesus commands (John 13:34-35; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:12). When Jesus returns, He will take His people to dwell with God (John 14:3).

Furthermore, Jesus emphasized that He and the Father were equal. Jesus called the disciples to have faith in Him, just as they did with God (John 14:1). Jesus taught that since they have seen Him, they have seen the Father (John 14:7, 9-11). Thus, Jesus rightfully claims that He alone is the way to God because He is God; He reveals the Father to humanity (John 1:1-3; 1:14, 18; 5:18-24; 8:58; 10:30; 14:6-11). Therefore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement of "I am the way" demonstrates that He is the Great I AM who alone can provide the way to God (John 14:6a).

Jesus Is the Great I AM Who Is the Truth

In the following part of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, He said, "I am … the truth" (John 14:6b). The truth of God is a prominent theme throughout the Old Testament. For instance, the psalmist declares, "The sum of your word is *truth*, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever" (Ps 119:160, emphasis mine). Daniel Estes comments, "All God says is trustworthy and reliable. Each of the Lord's righteous standards is everlasting, not failing and never expiring."[555] Truth is also the vehicle that enables communication with God. King David said, "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth" (Ps 145:18).

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[554] See: Heb 9:8; 10:14, 20.

[555] Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, edited by E. Ray. Clendenen, vol. 13, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 436.

Additionally, truth is used figuratively to refer to a path or way that is pleasing to God. For instance, David said, “Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation” (Ps 25:5a). Similarly, David wrote, “Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth” (Ps 86:11). Furthermore, the psalmist wrote, “Send out your light and your *truth*; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling” (Ps 43:3, emphasis mine). In Psalm 43, the psalmist longed to be in God’s presence at the temple but could not get there because of his enemies.[556] Gerald Wilson comments that the psalmist “seeks divine light and truth to provide guidance for a return to God’s holy hill and dwelling … God’s light and truth are necessary companions on the way to ensure safe arrival.”[557] Furthermore, truth is used an expression of His covenantal fidelity (Ps 40:10; 57:3; 86:11).[558]

Similarly, truth is a significant theme throughout the Gospel of the John.[559] For example, John wrote that Jesus is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14d). Furthermore, John said, "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Not only were the words that Jesus spoke truth, but truth is embodied in His person (John 1:14, 17; 14:6). Additionally, Jesus is the one who speaks God’s truth (John 8:26, 40, 45; 16:7). Jesus said, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Furthermore, it is Jesus who guides people to the truth of God (John 14:6b). Thus, one can only know truth by knowing Jesus, who declared Himself to be the truth with His "I am" statement (John 14:6b). Carson states it

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[556] Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 674.

[557] Ibid.

[558] VanGemeren, 387.

[559] Klink, 618.

well as he says, "Because of truth's intimate connection with Jesus, true disciples must not only hear his words: they must in some sort be united with him who is the truth."[560] Therefore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that Jesus is the Great I AM who alone provides the truth of God (John 14:6b).

Jesus Is the Great I AM Who Is the Life

In the last part of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, He said, "I am … the life" (John 14:6c). Throughout the Old Testament, it is God who is the only source of life, both physically and spiritually. For instance, the book of Genesis opens with "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). This verse teaches that God is eternal. He existed before anything was created, and all life originates from Him.[561] God is the one who gives life to creation, animals, and humans (Gen 1-2; 6:17).

Another example is found in Hannah's prayer; she said, "The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam 2:6). The phrase "יְהוָה מֵמִית וּמְחַיֶּה" which is translated as "The LORD kills and brings to life," communicates that Yahweh holds complete authority over life and death.[562] Similarly Yahweh declared, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and make alive" (Deut 32:39a). Strikingly, the Hebrew phrase "אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא," which is translated as, "I, even I, am he" points to the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John.[563] Furthermore, King David wrote, "For with you is the fountain of *life*; in your light do we

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[560] Carson, 349.

[561] John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 50.

[562] David Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 146.

see your light" (Ps 36:9, emphasis mine). Mitchell Dahood argues that David used "חַיִּים," which is translated as "life," to allude to eternal life.[564]

Jesus said, "I am … the life" (John 14:6b). The word translated as "life" is the Greek word ζωή. The most common meaning of the noun ζωή is to describe physical life and existence.[565] For example, John said, "In him was life [ζωή], and the life [ζωή] was the light of men" (John 1:4). Thus, Jesus is the source of all life, and it exists because of Him.[566] Similarly, Jesus said, "For as the Father has *life* in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have *life* in himself" (John 5:26, emphasis mine). Jesus possesses the same self-existence as the Father and provides life.[567] Moises Silva rightfully states that Jesus "is the source of divine life and power both in the old and in the new creation."[568]

However, in the Gospel of John, ζωή often refers to eternal life only available through believing in Jesus. Thus, John wrote, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life [ζωή]" (John 3:16. Additionally, Jesus said, "I came that they may have life [ζωή] and have it abundantly" (John

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[563] Macaskill, 224.

[564] Mitchell Dahood S.J., *Psalms I: 1-50: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 16, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 222. See: Rolf A. Jacobson and Beth Tanner, "Book One of the Psalter: Psalms 1–41," in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 344.

[565] Silva, "ζωή," 365.

[566] David J. MacLeod, "The Creation of the Universe by the Word: John 1:3–5," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (2003): 195.

[567] Stephen S. Kim, "The Christological and Eschatological Significance of Jesus' Miracle in John 5," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (2008): 421.

[568] Silva, "ζωή," 371.

10:10). Furthermore, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life [ζωή]" (John 11:25). The combination of "resurrection" and "life" in this verse points to the eternal life that Jesus alone provides.[569] Moreover, Jesus said, "This is eternal life [ζωή], that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Each of these instances of ζωή reveals that Jesus provides the greatest type of life, namely, eternal life.

Jesus rightfully claims that He is the ζωή because He is God who alone can provide physical and spiritual life (John 14:6c). John said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). John was making a clear connection to Genesis with the phrase "in the beginning" to show that Jesus is eternal.[570] Jesus provides life for all things (Gen 1; John 1:3-4). Furthermore, King David knew that Yahweh alone provided eternal life; likewise, Jesus claimed that it is only through Him that one receives eternal life (Ps 36:9; John 6:40; 14:6c). Leon Morris comments that "mere physical existence matters little. The only life worth the name is that which Jesus brings, for he is life itself."[571] Therefore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι declaration emphasizes that He is the Great I AM who alone gives true, eternal life (John 14:6c).

Jesus' "I am" declaration is a profound statement about His identity, as He revealed that He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement highlights His divine nature (John 1:1-3; 14:6-9). Furthermore, it emphasizes the exclusivity of faith in Him as the only means to access God (John 10:7; 14:6a). Moreover, it establishes that Jesus is the

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[569] Morris, 488.

[570] David J. MacLeod, "The Eternality and Deity of the Word: John 1:1–2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (2003): 53.

[571] Morris, 570.

ultimate embodiment of truth (John 1:14, 17; 14:6b) and source of life (John 6:35; 11:25; John 14:6c). Thus, Jesus' declaration demonstrates that Jesus is the Great I AM who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Chapter 6

John 15:1-11

Context of John 15:1-11

Prior to John 15:1-11, Jesus reminded the disciples that He was returning to the Father (John 14:28). Jesus mentioned that the "ruler of this world" was coming but had no claim on Him (John 14: 30). This refers to the devil, who was using Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2, 27).[572] Jesus then said to the disciples, "Rise, let us go from here" (John 14:31b). A similar phrase is found in the Gospel of Matthew and Mark. Jesus said, "Rise, let us be going; see my betrayer is at hand" (Matt 26:46; Mark 14:42). When compared to John 14:31, it *appears* that John was setting this narrative to have taken before Judas betrayed Him. [573]

However, John has Jesus entering a garden in John 18. John wrote that Jesus "went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden" (John 18:1). The correct parallel to Jesus' statement in John 14:31 is not what took place in the Garden of Gethsemane, but at the end of the last supper (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26).[574] Mark recorded, "And when they sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mark 14:26). Thus, Jesus' statement was a call to leave the supper (John 14:31).[575] Additionally, nothing suggests there could not have been

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[572] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, vol. 25B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 134.

[573] Robert H. Mounce, "John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 571.

[574] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 798.

[575] Michaels, 798. He comments further, "If in fact 'the ruler of the world is coming, and in me he has nothing' (v. 30), is that a reason to go out to meet him, or a reason to escape, as Jesus repeatedly escaped before (see 8:59; 10:39; 12:36)?"

an interlude between Jesus saying, "Rise, let us go from here," and John's mention of Jesus and the disciples entering a garden in John 18.[576] Morris further explains, "Anyone who has tried to get a group of a dozen or so people to leave a particular place at a particular time will appreciate that it takes more than the brief exhortation 'let us leave' to accomplish this."[577]

Jesus' following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement occurs at the beginning of John 15. Jesus said, "*I am* the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1, emphasis mine).[578] In the ancient world, viticultural imagery was typical in different types of literature.[579] For instance, an interpretation of Genesis 40:13 from the *Mishnah* stated, "'The *vine*—this represents the world. 'Three *branches*—this [represents] Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'" (*b. Hul.,* 92A).[580] Another example is found in the *Odes of Solomon*, a Jewish Pseudepigrapha writing from the first century AD.[581] While discussing Israel, the author stated, "For he [God] set the root, and watered it and adapted it and blessed it, and its fruits will be forever. It penetrated deeply and sprang up and

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[576] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 586–587. See also: Michaels, 798.

[577] Ibid.

[578] This is Jesus' thirteenth ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This is the seventh and final "I am" statement containing a metaphor. These types of "I am" statements contain conceptual parallels from the Old Testament that give proper background to understand the metaphors in these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements. See: Chapter 1, 8-9; Ball, 166. The implications of this "I am" statement will be discussed more in the "Biblical Theological Implications" section.

[579] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 513.

[580] Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 20 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 408. Emphasis mine.

[581] Coleman Ford and Rachel Klippenstein, "Odes of Solomon," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

spread out, and it was full and was enlarged. And the Lord alone was praised, in his planting and in his cultivation" (Odes Sol. 38:18-20).[582]

There are too many examples from various types of literature that used viticultural imagery to cover here (Sir 24:17-23; 2 Esd 5:23; *Lev*. *Rab*. 36:2).[583] Thus, any outside literature connections made to the viticultural imagery in John 15 need to be evaluated carefully.[584] The proper background of Jesus' use of viticultural imagery is grounded in the Old Testament.[585] Like the other ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John, its background needs to be understood with the Old Testament in mind.[586] Furthermore, it would be unusual to believe that John depended on other types of literature because his Gospel contains no evidence suggesting that is the case.[587]

The Synoptic Gospels include several instances where viticultural imagery is used, especially in Jesus' parables (Matt 21:28-44; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 13:6-9; 20:9-16). Each includes a vineyard owner who looks for fruit or expects more fruit to be produced. In contrast, John 15 shows no plot development, and Jesus claimed to be the vine (John 15:1, 5). Furthermore, in the parable of the tenants, the emphasis of Jesus' parable is on the tenants' refusal to give the owner what he deserves (good fruit), which leads to the killing of his son (Matthew 21:33-40; Mark

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[582] James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Expansions of the "Old Testament" and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, vol. 2 (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985), 767.

[583] Carson, 513.

[584] Ibid.

[585] These Old Testament connections will be discussed further in the upcoming "Biblical-Theological Implications" section.

[586] See: Chapter 1, 8-9; David M. Ball, *I Am in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, (Sheffield, England: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1996), 166.

[587] Carson, 513.

12:1-9; Luke 20:9-19).[588] Thus, John 15:1-17 is a unique Johannine inclusion and should be understood apart from the Synoptic Gospels.[589] Carson rightly suggests, "The vine imagery provides us with an extended metaphor without plot, an illustrative comparison—a form also known in the Synoptics" (Matt 24:32).[590] Consequently, the imagery used in John 15:1-11 should be understood similarly to how Jesus made use of an extended metaphor in John 10:1-18.[591]

John 15:1-11 Commentary

After examining the context of John 15:1-11, this section will discuss the interpretation of this passage. Jesus began, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1). This is the only "I am" statement in the Gospel of John that includes an additional predicate, namely, the Father. In the Old Testament, God was referred to as a vinedresser. For example, Asaph wrote, "You [God] brought a *vine* out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and *planted* it. You *cleared* the *ground* for it; it took *deep* root and filled the land (Ps 80:8-9, emphasis mine). Thus, just as Israel was frequently understood in light of a vine, God was referred to as a vinedresser of Israel (Ps 80:7-15; Isa 5:1-7).[592] However, this passage emphasizes Jesus as the vine (John 15:5).[593]

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[588] Ibid., 512.

[589] Borchert, 139.

[590] Carson, 513.

[591] Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 416.

[592] Edward W. Klink III, *John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 651.

[593] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (XIII-XXI): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 29A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 659.

Jesus said, “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2). In the Greek text, there is a play on two similar sounding words, αἴρει, which is translated as “he takes away,” and καθαίρει, which is translated as “he prunes” (John 15:2). This is the only occurrence of καθαίρει in the New Testament. It can mean “to cause something to be clean” or “to remove superfluous growth from a plant.”[594] Based on the context of this verse, the second definition is preferred since Jesus was using viticultural imagery (John 15:1-6). However, the first definition can be valid considering the context of the passage (John 15:3). It is plausible that Jesus intended for both definitions of καθαίρει to be understood.[595]

The word αἴρει means to “take away or remove.”[596] Thus, Jesus used αἴρει is used to describe the Father’s action towards the unfruitful branches.[597] Jesus highlighted that the Father’s actions were motivated by fruitfulness (John 15:2).[598] Jesus then said, “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you” (John 15:3). Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus told the disciples they were *clean* (John 13:10). Both verses have Jesus using καθαροί to describe that the disciples were clean (John 13:10; 15:3).

However, in John 15:3, Jesus said their cleanliness was because of the word “λόγον” He spoke to them. Jesus used the singular noun λόγον to refer to the entirety of His teaching (John

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[594] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 488.

[595] Mounce, 574.

[596] Arndt et al., 28.

[597] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 268.

[598] Morris, 593.

5:38; 14:23).[599] The concept of the cleansing power of God's word is found in the Old Testament. For instance, the psalmist wrote, "How can a young man *keep* his *way pure*? By guarding it according to your *word*" (Ps 119:9, emphasis mine).

Jesus continued, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me" (John 15:4). The word translated as "abide" is the Greek word μένω. John used this word 40 times in his Gospel. Ten of those occurrences are in John 15:1-11, highlighting that μένω is significant to the meaning of this passage. In the context of this passage, μένω communicates the concept of a person remaining or staying in something or someone.[600]

Similarly, Jesus used μένω to describe the close-knit relationship between Him and the Father. Jesus said, "I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who *dwells* [μένω] in me does his works" (John 14:10, emphasis mine). Thus, Jesus was speaking of the close-knit relationship He has with His disciples, illustrated by the vine and the branch imagery (John 15:4). Jesus was teaching that they needed to have a dependence on Him so that they could bear fruit.

Jesus then said, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Jesus was making it explicit that the disciples' fruitfulness can only come from abiding in Him. On the contrary, Jesus warned that those who do not abide in Him will be fruitless and in danger of being burned in the fire (John 15:6). Jesus' use of πῦρ, translated as "fire," and καίεται, translated as "burned" reveals that He was speaking of

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[599] See: Mounce, 574; Carson, 515; Morris, 595; Brown, 660; Borchert, 142.

[600] Arndt et al., 630.

judgment for the unfruitful branches.[601] Throughout the Bible, fire is often symbolic of judgment (Ps 11:6, Jer 4:4; Matt 3:12; 13:40-42). However, Jesus' emphasis is on the fruitfulness of His disciples by abiding in Him (John 15:5). Gary Burge states this well when he says, "Fruit-bearing is not a test; that is, a branch does not have to demonstrate a level of productivity to be safe from destruction. Rather, fruit-bearing is a byproduct."[602]

Jesus continued, "If you abide in me, and my words in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). Jesus and His word are used interchangeably because He is the incarnate Word (John 1:1-2, 14).[603] Thus, as the disciples remain in Jesus, His words will remain in them, resulting in obedience and fruitfulness.[604] Consequently, the disciples would receive whatever they ask for (John 15:7). Furthermore, Jesus said, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15:8). Praying for things in Jesus' name stems from abiding in Jesus, which glorifies the Father and provides outward evidence that one is a disciple (John 15:7-8).[605]

Jesus continued, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love" (John 15:9). It is unfathomable to begin to think how much the Father loves Jesus. In Jesus' prayer to the Father, He said, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you have loved me before

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[601] Carson, 517.

[602] Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 418.

[603] Brown, 662.

[604] Carson, 517.

[605] Klink, 654.

the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Jesus wanted His disciples to be mindful of His love for them so that they would abide in Him.[606] Thus, Jesus said, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:10). Jesus was communicating that obedience and loving Him were so intertwined that you cannot have one without the other.[607] Jesus continued and said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). Jesus wanted His disciples to know that obedience was not joyless.[608] Carson further comments, "[Jesus'] obedience to the Father is the ground of his joy; and he promises that those who obey him will share the same joy—indeed, that his very purpose in laying down such demands is that their *joy may be complete*."[609] Thus, true fulfillment and joy can only be found through Jesus.

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is the True and Greatest Vine

After examining John 15:1-11, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is the true and greatest vine in two manners. First, Jesus is the fulfillment of what God called Israel to be. This connection is made through typology.[610] Second, Jesus is the true and greatest vine because only by abiding in Him can God's people be cleansed from sin and live out their calling to be fruitful.

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[606] Morris, 597.

[607] Borchert, 146.

[608] Carson, 520.

[609] Ibid., 521. Emphasis original.

[610] See: Chapter 1.

One of the prominent connections from John 15:1-11 to the Old Testament is Isaiah 5:1-7. This passage is an extended parable about God and Israel.[611] The prophet Nathan used a similar type of parable in 2 Samuel 12:1-10.[612] The passage begins, "Let me sing for my beloved my love concerning his vineyard" (Isa 5:1). The vineyard is said to have been on a fertile hill (Isa 5:1b). Isaiah continued, "He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines (Isa 5:2a). The task of removing stones was essential for a vineyard to be fruitful.[613] Furthermore, "he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it" (Isa 5:2a). The use of viticulture language communicated to the audience that "the beloved" (God) did everything in His power to make it fruitful.[614]

However, things began to change as Isaiah said, "And he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes" (Isa 5:2c). In Hebrew, בְּאֻשִׁים, which is translated as "wild grapes," could be translated as "stink-fruit."[615] This word conveys the idea of putrid and rotten grapes (Isa 5:2, 4).[616] God then declared, "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge

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[611] Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 165. Smith further notes, "Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 126, rejects the parable approach because he believes a parable must convey a moral or maxim, and this story does not have one. It seems like there is a clear moral to this story even if it is not stated succinctly at the end of the parable. But having or not having a moral does not make something a parable. It is also not necessary to conclude that Isaiah borrowed this didactic story from the Wisdom School, since anyone could make up or tell parables." See: Oswalt, 151; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, Revised Edition., vol. 24, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 84.

[612] See: Smith, 165; Watts, 84.

[613] Oswalt., 153. He further notes, "Removing the stones is an essential task in a land where the limestone outcroppings help to produce the fertile *terra rosa* soil, but also produce untold numbers of surface rocks."

[614] Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 70.

[615] Ibid.

[616] P. Jenson, "בָּאַשׁ," edited by Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 580.

between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done for it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes" (Isa 5:3-4). God did everything possible to allow His vineyard to be fruitful. However, He got nothing but putrid, rotten fruit. Thus, the emphasis is on the failure of the vine to produce good fruit (Isa 5:4).[617]

Then God said, "And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (Isa 5:5-6). God was illustrating what the impending judgment on His vineyard would look like. The mention of "briers" and "thorns" conveys the idea of divine judgment (Isa 7:23-24; 32:13; 34:13; 55:13).[618] Yahweh revealed that His vineyard was none other than "the house of Israel, and the men of Judah" (Isa 5:7). Thus, judgment would be coming upon the people of God.[619]

God further revealed why Israel was facing His judgment by using two wordplays. First, God looked for *justice* "מִשְׁפָּט," but only found *bloodshed* "מִשְׁפָּח" (Isa 5:7b). Second, God looked for *righteousness* "צְדָקָה," but there was only an *outcry* "צְעָקָה" (Isa 5:7c). Gary Smith comments further, "God, the beloved one, 'expected, hoped' … the life of his wonderful vines would produce the fruit of justice and righteousness, but in reality his chosen people (specifically the wealthy oppressive leaders) produced only bloodshed and a distressing cry from the weak."[620]

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[617] Smith, 167.

[618] Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Proverbs–Isaiah (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III, Garland David E., vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 498.

[619] Ben Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 48.

God's people have utterly failed Him as His vineyard, living contrary to the ways He called them to live (Isa 5:8-30).

In the book of Jeremiah, Yahweh declared to His people, "Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?" (Jer 2:21). The similar language used in this verse suggests Isaiah 5:1-7 is the background.[621] Additionally, Ezekiel 15 describes how the wood of God's vine was only fit to be used as fuel for fire.[622] Yahweh declared, "Behold, it is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything" (Ezek 15:4-5). Yahweh makes it clear that He is referring to the people of Jerusalem (Ezek 15:6). The language used by Yahweh was explicit in conveying judgment to the audience.[623]

Moreover, Asaph wrote that God "brought a *vine* out of Egypt" (Ps 80:8, emphasis mine). Asaph later said, "Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine" (Ps 80:14). Tremper Longman comments, "The psalm speaks of God's people's special

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[620] Smith, 168.

[621] Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, ed. William P. Brown, Carol A. Newsom, and David L. Petersen, First Edition., The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 48. See: Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 21A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 277.

[622] Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 456.

[623] Block, 458. He further comments, "Yahweh is the one who throws the wood into the fire, and the wood represents their own compatriots, *the residents of Jerusalem.* The identification invites the hearers to conjure up in their minds horrendous images of the city in flames."

position and also their present predicament, using the figurative language of a vine" (Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; 12:10; Hos 10:1).[624]

These Old Testament passages are critical to consider when discussing the implications of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement (John 15:1, 5). Jesus said, "I am the *true* vine" (John 15:1). Jesus used the word ἀληθινὴ, which is translated as "true." Based on the context of John 15:1-11, ἀληθινὴ means "genuine or real."[625] Thus, Jesus is the one who is worthy to bear the title of the vine.[626] Jesus rightfully is the "true vine" because where Israel failed, He succeeded. The Israelites were supposed to be a "choice vine," bearing good fruit for God (Jer 2:21). However, they became a wild and degenerate vine that produced nothing but rotten fruit (Isa 5:2-4). In contrast, Jesus, as the true vine, produces good fruit that brings glory to God (John 15:4-8).

The Israelites could not live out their calling to be God's vineyard because they blatantly sinned against God (Isa 5:7-30; Jer 2:17-21). God declared to the Israelites, "Though you *wash* yourself with lye and use much soap, the *stain* of your *guilt* is still before me" (Jer 2:22, emphasis mine). God emphasized that their best efforts could not make them clean; they remained guilty.[627] However, Jesus, as the true and greatest vine, enables those who abide in Him to be made clean (John 15:2-3). Marianne Thompson summarizes this well, as she says, "Through Jesus' word, the disciples have come out of the realms of unbelief, mortality, and death

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[624] Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 301.

[625] Silva, "ἀλήθεια," 239.

[626] Ibid.

[627] Peter C. Craigie, *Jeremiah 1–25*, vol. 26, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1991), 38.

into the realm of faith, Spirit, and life (5:24; 6:63): they have been "cleansed" by the Holy One of God (6:69). And having been cleansed initially by Jesus' word, they will be pruned or cleansed by the Father's loving care so that they may remain as fruitful branches on the vine."[628] Furthermore, Jesus is the true and greatest vine because only those who abide in Him can become a part of God's family and live out His calling to be a fruitful vineyard (John 1:12; 15:3-5).

The Old Testament examples of God's vineyard also highlighted that Israel would face His judgment (Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21-22; Ezek 15:1-8). Similarly, Jesus said, "If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:6). Jesus was using language that would evoke judgment, such as 'thrown away,' 'withers,' 'fire,' and 'burned.'[629] There are many similarities between John 15:6 and Ezekiel 15:1-8. Both passages emphasize God's judgment on the uselessness of the vine's wood and what is found in John 15.

Carson rightly advocates, "When Ezekiel appealed to vine imagery, he warned that if a vine failed to produce fruit its wood was good for nothing but a fire (Ezek 15:1–8); Jesus assumes the same thing, and by thus alluding to Ezekiel, where the vine stands for Israel, he is warning his contemporaries of their imminent danger."[630] Therefore, it is only through Jesus, as the true vine, that one will not face judgment, be considered clean, and be fruitful for God (John

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[628] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition., The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 324.

[629] Carson, 517.

[630] Ibid.

15:1-8). Therefore, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in John 15:1, 5 demonstrates that He is the true and greatest vine.

John 18:1-11

Context of John 18:1-11

Prior to John 18:1-11, Jesus continued to give His disciples instructions because He was going back to the Father (John 16:5, 28). Jesus taught the disciples they would face persecution (John 16:1-3). Astonishingly, Jesus said, "Indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God" (John 16:2). Gerald Borchert further comments that this verse "clearly carries a sense of holy zeal, a jihad (a holy war), or a worshipful commitment on the part of the persecutors."[631] Despite Jesus' teachings, the disciples struggled to understand what He taught (John 16:18). Jesus revealed to the disciples that they would scatter and abandon Him when He got betrayed (John 16:32).

Jesus then took time to pray to the Father (John 17:1-26). Jesus stated that His hour had come (John 17:1a). Jesus' "hour" refers to His betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, eventual death, and glorification (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 27; 13:1; 17:1). Jesus knew His upcoming death would bring glory to the Father (John 17:2, 4). Jesus also emphasized that He protected the disciples and them in the Father's name (John 17:12a).

Jesus said, "Not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12b). Jesus asked the Father to protect the disciples from the evil one (John 17:15). As Jesus' prayer concluded, He said, "I made known to them your name, and I

[631] Borchert, 161.

will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:26).

In John 18, John began by stating, "When Jesus had spoken these words" (John 18:1a). In the Greek text, this verse begins with "Ταῦτα εἰπὼν," which can be translated as "having said these things."[632] John could have used ταῦτα εἰπὼν to refer to Jesus' prayer (John 17) or the content found in John 14-17.[633] Based on the context, the latter is more attractive since the prior chapters do not indicate any movement from Jesus since John 14:31.[634] John's use of ταῦτα εἰπὼν made it explicit that a transition in the narrative began.[635] Jesus was about to embrace the "hour" He spoke so much of in this Gospel (John 2:4; 17:1). Each of the Gospels moves towards the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[636]

John noted that this narrative took place in a garden near the Kidron Brook (John 18:1). The Kidron Brook was near the Mount of Olives, which the disciples were known to frequent with Jesus (Matt 26:30, 36; Mark 14:26, 32). Furthermore, the Kidron Brook only had water flowing during the winter season. [637] Thus, crossing it would pose no problem for Jesus and the disciples since it was the Passover.[638] John is the only Gospel writer that emphasizes Jesus was

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[632] Brown, 805.

[633] See: Carson, 576; Mounce, 609.

[634] See: Chapter 6.

[635] Klink, 732.

[636] Carson, 571.

[637] Craig S. Keener, "John," in *John*, vol. 2A of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament*. eds. Clinton E. Arnold; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 171.

[638] Ibid.

arrested in a garden (John 18:1). In comparison, Mark and Matthew refer to where Jesus was betrayed as Gethsemane (Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32).

John 18:1-11 Commentary

After examining the context of John 18:1-11, this section will discuss the interpretation of this passage. John stated that "[Jesus] went out with His disciples across the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples *entered*" (John 18:1, emphasis mine). John's use of εἰσῆλθεν, translated as "entered," and ἐξῆλθεν, translated as "came forward" in John 18:4, suggests that a wall enclosed the garden.[639] John made sure that Judas was identified as the *one* who *betrayed* Jesus as he wrote "Ἰούδας ὁ παραδιδοὺς αὐτὸν" (John 18:2a, NA[28]). This was the first time that Judas was mentioned since he left the prior dinner (John 13:27-30). John continued and said Judas "knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples" (John 18:2b). The Gospel of John never mentioned Jesus and the disciples frequenting this garden; however, that does not mean this is a false statement since John was selective in what he included in his Gospel (John 20:30; 21:25).[640]

Nevertheless, Judas Iscariot had the critical information needed to arrest Jesus. Thus, John said, "So Judas, having procured a *band* of soldiers and some officers from the chief priest and the Pharisees" (John 18:3a). John used the word σπεῖραν, which is translated as "band of soldiers," which was the typical Greek word used to refer to a cohort.[641] A cohort was generally

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[639] See: Carson, 576; Brown, 806; Michaels, 886.

[640] Luke is the only Gospel that records that Gethsemane was a place that Jesus frequently took His disciples. See: Luke 22:39.

[641] Ardnt et al., 936.

comprised of hundreds of soldiers.[642] However, the number of each cohort was not always a set number. According to Josephus, he wrote "Now these ten cohorts had severally a thousand footmen, but the other thirteen cohorts had no more than six hundred footmen apiece, with a hundred and twenty horsemen" (*J.W.* 3.67).[643] However, John's use of σπεῖραν was not to provide an exact number but to highlight the *size* of the group that went out to this garden (John 18:3).

Thus, John recorded that the band of soldiers was accompanied by "some officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" (John 18:3). In light of the Passover, it was common for the Romans to have extra soldiers in Jerusalem to help prevent or stop any potential violence or rebellion.[644] Furthermore, Craig Blomberg makes an excellent point when he says, "Given Jesus' fame, the potential for a riot, and the precaution exhibited by a Roman centurion with another famous Jewish prisoner a generation later (Paul, guarded by 270 men; Acts 23:23), it is perhaps not unreasonable to imagine the authorities bringing a similar number to Gethsemane."[645] Thus, John recorded they met Jesus with weapons (John 18:3; Matt 26:47; Mark 14:43).

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[642] Morris, 656. He further comments, "A cohort was the tenth part of a legion and thus normally comprised 600 men (though in practice the number varied a good deal). It was commanded by a χιλίαρχος (cf. v. 12). John will not, of course, mean that 600 or so soldiers took part in the arrest but that the "cohort" performed the task; in other words, a detachment was sent. Some point out that σπεῖρα was used on occasion of a maniple, which was one third of a cohort, that is, 200 men. But even this is rather large. John is surely not saying that the whole σπεῖρα was present, but rather using a form of speech like our "the police came to arrest the man."

[643] Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 642.

[644] Carson, 577.

[645] Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (England: Apollos, 2001), 229. See: Morris, 656; Beasley-Murray, 322.

John continued, “Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’” (John 18:4). John wanted to convey that Jesus was not surprised that this happened to Him (John 13:11, 18). Carson rightfully says, “Jesus offers up his life in obedience to his Father, not as a pathetic martyr buffeted by the ill winds of a cruel fate. In full knowledge of what was to befall him, Jesus *went out* … and asked his question.”[646] The group responded and said, “Jesus of Nazareth” (John 18:5a). Jesus’ response to them was only two words in Greek, namely, ἐγὼ εἰμι (John 18:5b).[647] John continued, “Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them” (John 18:5c). John used Judas’ name three times in short succession (John 18:2, 3, 5). This was because John wanted to make it explicit that Judas was responsible for leading the betrayal, and he did not exonerate Judas Iscariot’s actions.[648]

John pointed out, “When Jesus said to them, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground” (John 18:6). Some scholars attempt to explain the groups’ reaction naturally. Thus, Carson argues that the response of the band of soldiers was due to being in garden at night, not expecting Jesus to approach them.[649] Similarly, Morris advocates that their reaction was because Jesus did not act fearful while being arrested, causing them to fall back and over one another.[650] However, these interpretations should be dismissed as John, as an eyewitness, was recording

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[646] Carson, 577–578. Emphasis original.

[647] This is Jesus’ fourteenth and final ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in the Gospel of John. This is also the final of seven ἐγὼ εἰμι statements that contains no metaphor. This statement in John 18:5, 8 is grammatically absolute and ἐγὼ εἰμι stands alone. See: Chapter 1, 10; Ball, 169. The implications of this statement will be discussed further in the next section, “Biblical Theological Implications.”

[648] Carson, 578.

[649] Ibid.

[650] Morris, 658.

what he saw.[651] Gary Burge rightfully says, "Jesus' words provoke a response that even those who hear it likely do not understand. This is the biblical response of holy fear before the Lord."[652]

John continued, "So he asked them again, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth'" (John 18:7). Jesus responded "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go" (John 18:8). This is the third and final occurrence of ἐγὼ εἰμι in this pericope (John 18:5, 6, 8). Jesus wanted to make sure that the disciples' safety was secured. Thus, John said, "This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: 'Of these whom you gave me I have lost not one'" (John 18:9). John was referring to Jesus' prayer, in which He declared, "I have *guarded* them, and *not one of them has been lost* except the son of destruction" (John 17:12, emphasis mine). It is evident that John held Jesus' words in high esteem since he spoke of their fulfillment as equal to Scripture.[653]

Nevertheless, the following verse demonstrates that the disciples were unaware that Jesus was in control of the situation *at that moment*. John wrote, "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear" (John 18:10). This incident is covered in the other Gospels; however, John is the only one who provides that the servant was named Malchus (Matt 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50). The word for sword is "μάχαιραν," which describes a short sword or long knife, able to be worn with everyday clothing.[654] The

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[651] Mounce, 611.

[652] Burge, 492. The implications of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement will be discussed more in the upcoming section.

[653] See: Morris, 659; Beasley-Murray, 323; Borchert, 220; Klink, 737.

[654] Burge, 492.

pericope ends as Jesus said, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me” (John 18:11).

Biblical-Theological Implications

Jesus Is the Great I AM Who Reverses the Curse

After discussing John 18:1-11, this section will discuss the biblical-theological implications of this passage. Jesus’ ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is the great I AM who reverses the curse of sin (John 18:5, 6, 8). This connection is made through typology.[655] Additionally, Jesus ἐγὼ εἰμι statement demonstrates that He is sovereign over all the events (John 18:4, 6, 8-9, 11).

Throughout this passage, John highlighted Judas as the betrayer of Jesus (John 18:2, 3, 5). However, Judas was not working alone, he was working alongside the devil (John 13:2, 27). Thus, Jesus said to the disciples, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a *devil*” (John 6:70, emphasis mine). The Greek word used by Jesus is “διάβολος,” which in the Gospel of John is a reference to Satan (John 8:44; 13:2).[656] This does not mean that Judas and Satan are synonymous. Instead, it means the devil was using Judas as a fallen human being, to carry out his desires.[657]

John hinted at the ominous setting of Jesus’ betrayal as he reported, “So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was *night*” (John 13:30, emphasis mine). John’s mention that it was night was more than a time marker; it indicated the spiritual darkness

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[655] See: Chapter 1.

[656] See: Mounce, 453; Carson, 276; Morris, 345; Borchert, 276.

[657] Carson, 276.

surrounding Judas' actions.[658] Thus, "night" is symbolic of spiritual darkness. For instance, Jesus said, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is *day*; *night* is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4, emphasis mine). Furthermore, Jesus said, "But if anyone walks in the *night*, he stumbles, because the light is not in him" (John 11:10, emphasis mine). Therefore, John's mentioning of Judas' betrayal of Jesus at night is no accident, as it points to the influence of spiritual darkness.[659]

Additionally, the Gospel of John makes it clear that Satan wanted Jesus to die, which is in line with his character (John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2, 27). Furthermore, the devil was not working alone. He used Judas, the Romans, the chief priests, and Pharisees to achieve what he wanted (John 5:18; 7:30, 44; 8:20, 44; 10:31; 18:2, 3, 5). This idea is also highlighted in the New Testament as the Apostle Paul wrote, "None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8). Paul was referring to the leaders who were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.[660] However, it includes the demonic forces that were working behind these leaders (Eph 3:10; 6:10-12).[661]

Nevertheless, instead of thwarting God's plan, Satan and these earthly rulers were bringing fulfillment to God's will of Jesus' death on the cross (John 10:17-18). Throughout this narrative, John emphasized that Jesus was in control. Thus, John said that Jesus "*knew* all that

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[658] See: Morris, 558; Carson, 476; Brown, 579; Borchert, 95.

[659] Ibid.

[660] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Revised Edition., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 111.

[661] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 125.

would *happen* to Him" (John 18:4a, emphasis mine). Furthermore, Jesus did not run away from the situation; instead, John recorded that Jesus "*came forward* and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?'" (John 18:4b, emphasis mine). Thus, Jesus did not get "arrested;" instead, He surrendered to the arrest by the Romans, chief priests, and Pharisees.[662] Thus, Jesus said, "Put your sword into its sheath; *shall I not drink the cup* that the *Father has given me*?" (John 18:11, emphasis mine).

Moreover, Jesus was always conscious of the "hour" coming upon Him (John 2:4; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:21, 32). Each instance refers to His betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, eventual death, and glorification. Jesus prayed, "Father, the *hour* has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" (John 17:1b, emphasis mine). Jesus knew that his hour of death had finally arrived. [663] Therefore, Jesus demonstrates His sovereignty over human authorities and Satan because He knew His death was God's will (John 10:17-18; 18:4-8, 11; Luke 24:26; Acts 2:23; 3:17).

Furthermore, Jesus demonstrates He is greater than religious leaders based on their reaction to His "I am" statement in John 18:5-6. When Jesus asked the soldiers and religious leaders whom they were seeking, they confirmed it was Jesus of Nazareth (John 18:5a). Jesus' response to them was ἐγὼ εἰμι (John 18:5, 6, 8). John recorded that when Jesus responded with ἐγὼ εἰμι "they drew back and fell to the ground" (John 18:6). The Old Testament points to some similarities to the groups' reaction to Jesus' statement (John 18:6). For instance, in Genesis 17 God appeared to Abram and when he knew it was Yahweh, the narrator records, "Then Abram

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[662] See: Brown, 809; Morris, 657; Borchert, 219.

[663] Thompson, 348.

fell on his *face*" (Gen 17:3, emphasis mine). The word "נָפַל," translated as "fell," expresses the awe that Abram felt in God's presence (Josh 5:14; 2 Chr 7:1-3; Ezek 1:28).[664] However, the Old Testament also records that falling down was a proper response for a human superior (Gen 37:10; 42:6; 44:14; 2 Sam 9:6; 1 Kgs 18:7).[665]

Some scholars suggest that Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John 18:4, 5, 8 points to a theophany.[666] On the contrary, Beasley-Murray argues that the response of falling down is what is known as *mysterium tremendum,* which describes awe in the presence of God (Ezek 1:28; Dan 10:9; Acts 9:4; Rev 1:17).[667] Regardless of how one chooses to understand the actions falling to the ground at Jesus' words, it is undeniable that John's use of irony in this Gospel demonstrates people saying or doing something greater than they knew (John 11:49-52).[668]

Therefore, based on the context of John 18:1-11, the best way to understand their reaction is due to Jesus' divinity. This is because the Gospel of John repeatedly emphasizes Jesus' deity (John 1:1-3, 10, 14, 18) and equality with the Father (John 5:18; 8:58; 10:30). The groups' reaction was not natural but a supernatural response, which His use of ἐγὼ εἰμι signaled.[669]

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[664] Kenneth. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 201.

[665] Ibid.

[666] See: Barnabus Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 541; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 639.

[667] Beasley-Murray, 220. See: Burge, 492.

[668] Carson, 578.

[669] Burge, 492.

Furthermore, Jesus used ἐγὼ εἰμι in this passage in an absolute sense, pointing to His deity.[670] Additionally, John recorded that Jesus' use of ἐγὼ εἰμι was what caused them to fall to the ground (John 18:6).

Finally, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in John 18:4, 5, 8 points to Jesus as the One who would reverse the curse of sin upon humanity. In the Garden of Eden, the devil tempted Adam and Eve to sin against God (Gen 3; Rev 12:9). Adam and Eve gave into this temptation, thus bringing sin upon the whole human race (Gen 3; Rom 3). However, God proclaimed to Eve, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). John Sailhamer further comments, "The two sides represent two seeds, the 'seed' of the snake and the 'seed' of the woman. In the ensuing battles a 'seed' of the woman will crush the head of the snake. Though wounded in the struggle, the woman's "seed" will prove victorious."[671] Although the identity of the woman's seed is not given in the verse, it is revealed later throughout Genesis and the rest of Scripture.[672] Thus, the New Testament emphasizes that this "seed" is none other than Jesus Christ, who would crush and conquer the serpent (Rom 16:20; Rev 12:10-12).

Furthermore, John is the only Gospel writer who emphasized that Judas' betrayal of Jesus took place in a garden (John 18:2). As previously mentioned, Judas was working with the devil to betray Jesus (John 13:2, 27). Furthermore, John emphasized that Jesus was crucified near a

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[670] Grant Macaskill, "Name Christology, Divine Aseity, and the I Am Sayings in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 12, no. 2 (2018): 223; Ball, 169; Chapter 1, 9-10.

[671] John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 91.

[672] Ibid.

garden (John 19:41). Moreover, Jesus' first appearance after His resurrection took place in a *garden* (John 20:15). The emphasis on a garden in the Gospel of John was intentionally used to draw a connection to Genesis.[673] Edward Klink summarizes it well as he comments, "Both gardens saw the production of life and death, but the second reversed the order of the first: the first garden was the place where death was born out of life; the second garden was the place where life was born out of death."[674]

Before Jesus' final breath on the cross, He declared one word, τετέλεσται, which is translated as, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The word τετέλεσται communicates that Jesus completed all the work God called Him to do (John 19:28, 30).[675] Jesus came to do God's work, and this meant dying on the cross to provide salvation to those who believe in Him (John 3:16; 10:17-18; 18:11). Furthermore, in the book of Revelation, John wrote, "Now the *salvation* and the *power* and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 12:10-11). Moreover, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from *death* to *life* (John 5:24, emphasis mine).[676] Thus, Jesus ἐγὼ εἰμι statements (John 18:4, 5, 8) demonstrate that He is the great I AM who reverses the curse of sin.

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[673] Klink III, 733.

[674] Ibid. Emphasis original.

[675] Morris, 720.

[676] See: John 1:29; 3:18; 5:29; 8:51.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This dissertation has demonstrated that the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements made by Jesus in the Gospel of John highlight the biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness. In each "I am" statement, the surrounding text reveals this biblical-theological theme by comparing Jesus to the people and events recorded in the Old Testament and Judaism, along with common beliefs held during the first century AD. Moreover, there are occasions when the text reveals that Jesus is the greater fulfillment of an Old Testament type. Additionally, each "I am" statement is related to the overall themes presented by John in his Gospel.

This study has also observed that the historical study of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John has often searched for parallels from Gnostic, Mandaic, or Hellenistic sources. Thus, scholars have sought parallels from *outside* literature in an attempt to understand the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John. However, David M. Ball's work shifted the research of the "I am" statements from *outside* sources and argued that these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements should be viewed through the lens of the Old Testament and Judaism.[677] Ball's study displayed the faultiness of relying on outside literature to interpret the "I am" statements.[678] Relying on these outside sources leads to diminishing Jesus' identity and misses the crucial Old Testament and Judaic background on which each ἐγὼ εἰμι statement is based.

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[677] David M. Ball, *I Am in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, (Sheffield, England: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1996).

[678] Ibid.

Furthermore, all 14 of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements in the Gospel of John (including those with and those without a metaphor) are interconnected uniformly, highlighting the biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness. For example, Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "*I* who speak to you *am* he" (John 4:26, emphasis mine) and "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35) both communicate this theme although they differ in form. John intended these declarations to reveal the truth about Jesus' identity in conjunction with the overarching narrative of God's word and work in the world.

In Jesus' first ἐγὼ εἰμι statement He said, *"I* who speak to you *am* he" (John 4:26). Here, Jesus states that He is greater than Jacob because He alone can provide living water that truly satisfies and leads to eternal life. Moreover, Jesus' declaration highlighted His supremacy over the racial tensions that existed during the first century AD between the Jews and Samaritans, as He provided a way for all people to worship in spirit and truth. Jesus' following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "It *is I*. Do not be afraid" (John 6:20, emphasis mine), demonstrates that Jesus is greater than the sea. It was argued that the Passover was the appropriate background for understanding this pericope (John 6:16-21). Furthermore, it is essential to consider how people throughout history feared the sea. Jesus' "I am" statement reveals His divinity and authority over the sea. Jesus' following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48, 51), reveals that He is greater than manna, as He is the bread of God that leads to eternal life and does not perish. Furthermore, this ἐγὼ εἰμι statement highlights that Jesus is greater than Moses, as Jesus provided the bread of God Himself, while Moses acted only as a mediator. Moreover, Jesus is the one whom Moses wrote about (John 5:45-47; 6:31-33).

Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), highlights that He is greater than the Pillar of Fire as He made His declaration during the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated God's guidance through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and fire. Furthermore, this "I am" statement demonstrates that Jesus is greater than darkness, as He provides light to overcome spiritual darkness. The following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement is, "For unless you believe that *I am* he you will die in your sins" (John 8:24b, emphasis mine). Jesus alludes to His identification with the great I AM of Isaiah. In the following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* he" (John 8:28a, emphasis mine). This declaration reveals that Jesus would be greatly exalted through His death. Furthermore, this "I am" declaration shows that Jesus has the greatest authority as the Son of Man, and He is the greater fulfillment of the bronze serpent.

In the following "I am" statement, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, *I am*" (John 8:58, emphasis mine). Jesus declares that He is greater than Abraham because He existed eternally. Furthermore, this is an explicit reference to His equality with Yahweh. Additionally, this ἐγὼ εἰμι declaration further emphasizes that Jesus is the greatest substitution, the greater fulfillment of what Abraham saw when he went to sacrifice Isaac. Moreover, this ἐγὼ εἰμι statement shows that Jesus is the greater Isaac, as He is the beloved, only Son who *was* sacrificed and brought about the fulfillment of God's promises.

Jesus' following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am the door" (John 10:7, 9) demonstrates that anyone who believes in Him can access God and receive salvation. In a world full of different beliefs and gods, Jesus is the only door that leads to God; all other claims are false. The following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14) demonstrates that Jesus

is the greatest shepherd. Jesus contrasts Himself with the false shepherds that came before Him, and He equates Himself with Yahweh in John 10. The following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25a), highlights that Jesus is greater than death because He offers eternal life and resurrection to all who believe in Him. This is immediately demonstrated in John 11 when Jesus brings Lazarus back to life after being dead for four days. Jesus' words of John 11:25 also provided assurance to those when the Gospel of John was written. Many people lived in fear of the Roman empire, but those who trusted in Jesus did not have to give in to this fear because of Jesus' power over death.

Jesus' next ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that *I am* he" (John 13:19, emphasis mine), is an allusion to the great "I AM" of Isaiah, demonstrating that Jesus is greater than David because He suffered a more significant betrayal and is the fulfillment of the promised Son of David. Moreover, Jesus' "I am" statement in John 13:19 alludes to Jesus as the Lamb of God, the greatest and final sacrifice. Jesus' following ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6) demonstrates that He is the great I AM who alone is the only way to God, the embodiment of truth, and the key to eternal life by faith in Him.

Jesus' next "I am" statement, "I am the true vine" (John 15:1a) demonstrates that He is the true and greater vine who fulfills the purpose of Israel, since only through Him can one receive cleansing from sin and bear fruit that honors God. In the final ἐγὼ εἰμι statement, Jesus said to those who came to arrest Him, "*I am* he" (John 18:5, 6, 8, emphasis mine). This declaration reveals that He is the great I AM. Furthermore, Jesus is the one who had the power to

reverse the curse of sin. Additionally, this "I am" declaration (John 18:5, 6, 8) highlights that Jesus is sovereign over all events.

In conclusion, all 14 of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμι statements uniformly highlight the biblical-theological theme of Jesus' surpassing greatness. Thus, there is no need to classify them in different categories based on their form. This study has furthered the unification of these "I am" statements in the Gospel of John under the proposed biblical-theological theme. Jesus made His "I am" declarations to communicate His surpassing greatness, further revealing the truth of His identity and role in God's plan. Furthermore, the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements are connected to the major themes presented in the Gospel of John. It would be challenging to argue against the unification of all 14 "I am" statements because Jesus intended these ἐγὼ εἰμι statements to communicate His surpassing greatness. Previously, there had been too much emphasis on the form of the "I am" statements without any significant connections between them. This dissertation has shown that Jesus intended the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements to be interconnected under the proposed biblical-theological theme. Additionally, this dissertation provides discussion for new avenues for Johannine scholars to explore other biblical-theological themes that arise from the ἐγὼ εἰμι statements.

Appendix A

Jesus' "I am" Statements in the Gospel of John

Reference	Greek Text (NA[28])	English Translation (ESV)	Category: Metaphor or No Metaphor
John 4:26	"λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι"	"Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'"	No Metaphor
John 6:20	"ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε"	"But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.'"	No Metaphor
John 6:35, 48, 51	"εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς"	"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life'"	Metaphor
John 8:12	"Πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου"	"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world'"	Metaphor
John 8:24	"εἶπον οὖν ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν· ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν"	"I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."	No Metaphor
John 8:28	"εἶπεν οὖν [αὐτοῖς] ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ὅταν ὑψώσητε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τότε γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, καὶ ἀπ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ ποιῶ οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐδίδαξέν με ὁ πατὴρ ταῦτα λαλῶ."	"So Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.'"	No Metaphor

John 8:58	“εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί”	“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’”	No Metaphor
John 10:7, 9	“Εἶπεν οὖν πάλιν ὁ Ἰησοῦς∑ ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων.”	“So Jesus again said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.’”	Metaphor
John 10:11, 14	“Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός.”	“I am the good shepherd.”	Metaphor
John 11:25	“εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς∑ ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή”	“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life’”	Metaphor
John 13:19	“ἀπ’ ἄρτι λέγω ὑμῖν πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι, ἵνα πιστεύσητε ὅταν γένηται ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι.”	“I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he.”	No Metaphor
John 14:6	“λέγει αὐτῷ [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωή.”	“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life.’”	Metaphor
John 15:1, 5	“Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινὴ.”	“I am the true vine.”	Metaphor
John 18:5, 6,	“ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον. λέγει αὐτοῖς ἐγώ εἰμι.”	“They answered him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am he.’”	No Metaphor

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